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# THE MYSTERY OF GOLF

*BY ARNOLD HAULTAIN*

*Two Country Walks in Canada*

*Hints for Lovers*

*The Mystery of Golf*

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# THE MYSTERY OF GOLF

BY

T. ARNOLD HAULTAIN

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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I HAVE essayed in this little treatise a difficult task. I have tried to interest both those who play, and those who do not play, golf; and between the former and the latter there is, I know, a great gulf fixed. Can that gulf be bridged? Well, I have tried to bridge it; and the kindly reception accorded to my first edition gives me hope that I have not tried in vain.

Golf is a peculiar game — a very peculiar game. To the onlooker, no doubt, it seems to be one of the silliest and stupidest of games. To the player, golf seems to contain within itself the quintessential attribute of all games; so much so, indeed, that the golfer thinks that he who would or could wholly explain the inner and hidden nature of golf would explain the inner and hidden nature of all games.

And games play a most important part in life; so important a part, that eminent philosophers now hold that "games" are in reality a

preparation for life, that "play" is but another form of "education." Indeed, there is now what is called a psychology of games. That is to say, men of acute analytical intellect are trying to answer such questions as, How comes it about that games are universally played by mankind, that they have from time immemorial been played by mankind? Are they a mere pass-time, or does some inherited and ineradicable instinct compel boys and girls — and grown men and women — to play games? If so, what function do games perform? Are they utilitarian, or are they purely æsthetic or artistic? Do they make for the good of the race — do they help on human progress — do they make boys and girls, men and women, better fitted to play their part in life; or are they a mere superfluity and pleasure? What is their aim or object? In short, *why* do we play games?

Well, it seemed to me that if I could make a psychological analysis of this one game of golf, a game which, as I have hinted, players of golf think contains within itself the quintessential attribute of all games, I should be throwing a little light on the psychology of games in

general. Just as, for example, an anatomist who made a complete and exhaustive dissection of any one single vertebrate animal would throw a great deal of light on vertebrate animals as a whole; and more than one anatomist has done this very thing.

But, I shall be asked, how does this bridge the chasm between those who play, and those who do not play, golf? Thus: Everybody plays some game — most of us play several — often enough to the detriment of our tempers and to the depletion of our purses. Is it not rather an interesting problem why we play games at all? I know I should be keenly interested in knowing why it is that so many of my friends, highly intellectual friends, take the utmost delight in spending hour after hour over bridge. I take it that if somebody really wrote a psychology of bridge his would be a most entertaining, a most instructive, treatise. Well, I have tried to write a Psychology of Golf.

"But, my dear Sir," so can I imagine a practical but impatient golfer saying to me, "of what earthly use is a Psychology of Golf to me? I don't care a fig for the psychology of golf;

all I want to know is how to improve my game."

My dear Sir, I shall say in reply, between you and me, I am firmly convinced that golf is a game that requires a lot of thinking about. It isn't a game that you can go out and play as you play, say, marbles or pitch-and-toss. It is a game every stroke in which, I will not say requires — yes, I will say requires — thought. Vardon himself tells us, "You must be thoughtful if you want to get on in golf." The youngest caddie and the oldest professional probably think out their strokes, though they do not call that thinking "psychology." Well, I have here tried to analyse scientifically that process of thought, and this scientific analysis is the Psychology of Golf.

Besides, you, Sir, will assuredly admit that one of the chief factors that make for the improvement of one's game is the cultivation of that mental quietude, that self-confidence, that imperturbability of soul so necessary to success. Well, *that* is not come at or achieved without thought, without introspection, without self-analysis, without a certain pulling oneself together; and personally I think this can be

greatly helped by a study of the psychology of golf. — I wish I could have read my own book before I took up the game (!). Alas! I wrote the book after long and desperate attempts to play the game.

Besides, Mr. Practical Golfer, whether it improves your game or not, Golf *has* a Psychology, and a Psychology interesting enough to be written down.

I hope Messieurs Edward M. Kenyon-Stow and Max Behr and W. H. Blake will permit me publicly to thank them here for the very kind interest they have shown in my book: their encouragement has been a source of great consolation. Also I cannot speak too highly of the help afforded me by my stenographer, Miss Myrtle Winterbottom.

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*". . . ces jeux où se mêlent merveilleusement, pour interroger notre fortune, le hasard et la science; jeux presque mystiques et toujours passionnants, où l'homme se plaît à tâter sa chance aux confins de son être."*

— MAURICE MAETERLINCK.

# THE MYSTERY OF GOLF

THREE things there are as unfathomable as they are fascinating to the masculine mind: metaphysics, golf, and the feminine heart. The Germans, I believe, pretend to have solved some of the riddles of the first, and the French to have unravelled some of the intricacies of the last; will some one tell us wherein lies the extraordinary fascination of golf?

I have just come home from my Club. We played till we could not see the flag; the caddies were sent ahead to find the balls by the thud of their fall; and a low large moon threw whispering shadows on the dew-wet grass or ere we trode the home-green. At dinner the talk was of golf; and for three mortal hours after dinner the talk was — of golf. Yet the talkers were neither idiots, fools, nor monomaniacs. On the contrary, many of them were grave men of the world. At all events, the most monomaniacal of the lot was a prosper-

ous man of affairs, worth I do not know how many thousands, which thousands he had made by the same mental faculties by which this evening he was trying to probe or to elucidate the profundities and complexities of this so-called "game." Will some one tell us wherein lies the mystery of golf?

## I

I am a recent convert to the game. But it is the recent convert who most closely scrutinizes his creed — as certainly it is the recent convert who most zealously avows it. The old hand is more concerned about how he plays than about why he plays; the duffer is puzzled at the extraordinary fascination which his new-found pass-time exercises over him. He came to scoff; he remains to play; he inwardly wonders how it was that he was so long a heretic; and, if he is a proselyte given to Higher Criticism, he seeks reasons for the hope that is in him.

Well, I know a man, whether in the flesh of the flesh I cannot tell, I know such

an one who some years ago joined a golf club, but did not play. The reasons for so extraordinary a proceeding were simple. The members (of course) were jolly good fellows; the comfort was assured; the links — the landscape, he called it — were beautiful. But he did not play. What fun was to be derived from knocking an insignificant-looking little white ball about the open country he did not see. Much less did he see why several hundred pounds a year should be expended in rolling and cutting and watering certain patches of this country, while in others artfully-contrived obstacles should be equally expensively constructed and maintained. Least of all could he understand (he was young then, and given to more violent games) how grown-up men could go to the trouble of travelling far, and of putting on flannels, hob-nailed boots, and red coats, for the simple and apparently effortless purpose of hitting a ball as seldom as possible with no one in the world to oppose his strength or his skill to their hitting; and it seemed to him not a little childish to erect an elaborate club-house, with dressing-rooms, dining-rooms, smoking-rooms, shower-baths, lock-

ers, verandahs, and what-not, for so simple a recreation, and one requiring so little exertion. Surely marbles would be infinitely more diverting than that. If it were football, now, or even tennis — and he once had the temerity to venture to suggest that a small portion of the links might be set apart for a court — the turf about the home-hole was very tempting. The dead silence with which this innocent proposition was received gave him pause. (He sees now that an onlooker might as well have requested from a whist party the loan of a few cards out of the pack to play card-tricks withal.)

## II

Yet it is neither incomprehensible nor irrational, this misconception on the part of the layman of the royal and antient game of golf. To the uninitiated, what is there in golf to be seen? A ball driven of a club; that is all. There is no exhibition of skill opposed to skill or of strength contending with strength; there is apparently no prowess, no strategy, no tactics — no pitting of muscle and brain against muscle and brain. At least, so it seems to the

layman. When the layman has caught the infection, he thinks — and knows — better.

But, as a matter of fact, contempt could be poured upon any game by any one unacquainted with that game. We know with what apathetic indifference Subadar Chinniah or Jemadar Mohamed Khan looks on while Tommy Atkins swelters as he bowls or bats or fields under a broiling Indian sun, or Tommy's subalterns kick up the maidan's dust with their polo-ponies' hoofs. And what could be more senseless to a being wholly ignorant of cards than the sight of four grey-headed men gravely seating themselves before dinner to arrange in certain artificial combinations certain uncouth pictures of kings and queens and knaves and certain spots of red and black? Not until such a being recognizes the infinite combinations of chance and skill possible in that queen of sedentary games does he comprehend the fascination of whist. And so it is with golf. All that is requisite in golf, so it seems to the onlooker, is to hit; and than a "hit" nothing surely can be simpler or easier — so simple and easy that to have a dozen sticks to hit with, and to hire a man to carry them, is not

so much a sign of pitiable insanity as of wilful stupidity. The puerility of the proceeding is enough to make the spectator irate. Especially as, owing to the silence and the seriousness with which the golfer plays, and his reticence as to the secret of the game — for none knows better than the golfer that the game renders up its secret only to the golfer, if even to him — this quiet, red-coated individual is surrounded with a sort of halo of superiority, a halo not made by himself. No wonder the onlooker's anger is aroused. That expertness in puerility of this sort should of itself exalt a man, make him possessed of that which obviously, yet unintentionally, raises him above the intelligent yet indignant onlooker — there is something in this past finding out. Nor does he find it out till he himself is converted. Golf is like faith: it is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; and not until it is personally experienced does the unbelieving change from the imprecatory to the precatory attitude.

## III

However, the erstwhile aforesaid non-playing member of the golf club in question, the supple-

ness of his epiphyses, it may be, becoming (perhaps not quite imperceptibly) unequal to the activity and agility demanded of them by more ardent games, purchased, first one club, then another, then a sheaf, and betook himself to the task of finding out *a posteriori*, by the experimental method, what there was in the confounded game that brought the players there by scores to play. — And to talk of their play. For it should be added that the talk at that club puzzled him as much as the play. It was not enough that keen King's Counsel, grave judges, erudite men of letters, members of Parliament, and shrewd men of business should play as if the end of life were to hole a ball; but they talked as if the way a ball should be holed were the only knowledge worth possessing. Well, he played; or, to be more precise, he attempted to play, and, fortunately for him, he persevered in the attempt. Then indeed did the scales fall from his eyes. He discovered that there was more in golf than met the eye — much more.

## IV

How great a similarity there is in all outdoor human games! Probably ninety per cent of

outdoor games consist in the propulsion of a spherical or spheroidal object towards a certain spot. In cricket, rounders, football, baseball, polo, basket-ball, croquet, marbles, tennis, racquets, quoits, billiards, bagatelle, fives, pool, curling, lacrosse, hockey, ping-pong, golf, either one party assails with a ball, a sphere, a spheroid, or a disc a position defended by another, or both parties assail with a similar object the selfsame position, victory lying with the party reaching it first. It would be interesting to dive into the primæval origin of games and to discuss whether the first distinct differentiation of the man from the ape did not consist in the ability to throw a stone and wield a bough, to attack with a sphere and defend with a stick, the pithecanthropoid prototypes of batting and bowling. The first ape that tried to possess himself of a fruit he could not reach, or to repel a foe he could not grapple, by throwing a stone or using a branch, was in all probability the progenitor of the human race. It may, indeed, be that man's erect posture was gradually evolved by this attempt to throw and wield (which could not be done on all fours), and that the ape became the true ἄνθρωπος — the true "face-up-turning" animal

(*ἀνὰ—τρέπω—ὤψ*) — when he succeeded in hurling and hitting. In the case of this supposititious ape, the throwing and hitting were actions primarily prompted by hunger or love, by the desire to obtain food or by the desire to obtain a mate (or to keep off a rival) — the two primal instincts of life. In so far they were highly utilitarian.

With all due deference to Schiller and to Herbert Spencer, with their theory of the "play instinct" as at the bottom of all art, I contend that all our amusements, like all our art, derive ultimately from the most serious, most utilitarian instincts. In the world of life, mere play, *qua* play, is as non-existent as, in the world of nature, is mere beauty, *qua* beauty. Beauty is but the perfection of useful matter. The most lovely landscape is but hills and dales and trees. The most wonderful human body is but muscle and bone and fat and fascia and nerve. There is nothing in nature, and there is nothing in the anatomical frame, put there for beauty's sake alone. All is for use; nothing for ornament. And as art is but the reproduction, the representation, of the perfection of useful nature, so sport is but a

reproduction, the representation of the perfection of useful occupation. Even the gambols of kittens and puppies are the hereditary and instinctive reproduction of contests with teeth or claws; and teasing, bullying, practical joking, and prize-fighting show us how thin and how easily crossed is the line of demarcation between imitation and actual combat. In this sense only, in piping times of peace, when man was not afraid of his fellow-man, can man be said to have "played" with his fellow-man — contended with him in amicable and imitative combat. — They are near akin, are art and sport; the one being the intellectual and emotional, the other the muscular and nervous, representation of the primal and highly utilitarian instincts of hunger and love exerting themselves, in the form of hunting and mating and fighting, in a world of animal and vegetable life.

All masculine games are contests. Whether there are any such things as feminine games proper is doubtful. When girls play games they play with their brothers, or they play their brothers' games. And even when they play among themselves, their games prove the evolutionary law, and show themselves to be

refinements on primæval feminine occupations: they play at "doll's-house," at "school," at "mistress and maid"; they pay visits to one another, they dress up in their elders' clothes, they make mud-pies, they erect diminutive domiciles, they nurse unheeding dolls. Of these the derivation is obvious.

One other species of games there is, but as into it little or no element of sport enters, it needs not to be classified here. The instinct to bet and to gamble is perhaps as primæval as the instinct to fight. Indeed, even in betting and gambling the highest ingredient of combat is apparent. When we bet on a horse we back our knowledge of odds and weights and age against the knowledge of the man who books our bet. When we throw dice, or choose a number, or lay our money on the Red or the Black, we back our luck against that of our opponent. In sheer gambling we pit our own chances against those of our fellow-gamblers, and by so doing we, as it were, defy Fate: one of two things is fated to happen, and we lay money on our hope that Fate will favour us and not our fellow-gambler. — But Herr Karl Groos has devoted pages upon pages to this in the

laborious manner in which psychological investigations such as these are to-day carried on.[1] In almost all games, too, an element of chance inheres — inheres, and thus perhaps enhances the interest of the game. But it is a question whether a game of mere and sheer chance deserves the name. Rouge et Noir is hardly a "game"; a sport it certainly is not.

## V

Art and sport, I have said, are near akin. Whatsoever theory of art we hold, — and their name is legion, — this, at all events, is for ever true: the artist reveals to us how he looks out upon life. And I am not sure that this is not at once one of the supreme functions and one of the supreme fascinations of art. To all of us Life is a puzzle; and if so be a man here and there can give us a clue to that puzzle, can rede for us even a little bit of the riddle of the universe, to him we listen, to him we look. In a picture — a sonata — a statue, the colour, the sound, the form assuredly may interest us;

[1] See *The Play of Man*. By Karl Groos. Translated by Elizabeth L. Baldwin. Pp. 204 *et seq.* New York: Appleton and Co. 1901.

but the colour, the sound, and the form, after all, are but vehicles for the artist's thought and emotion. It is the artist's conception of life that is so interesting.

So it is with sport. We like immensely to know exactly how a man boxes or fences or drives; but, underneath this, we like immensely to know how he fights the battle of life; for he will do the one as he does the other — that we feel. So there is great kinship between artist and sportsman. Each reveals himself in his work; and it is in this self-revelation that humanity takes an absorbing interest. For is it not in self-revelation that the secret of the universe is to be sought? We know nothing of this universe save as it filters itself through our own little minds — filters itself twice, indeed: through our senses and through our minds — to say nothing of a third filter, that, namely, of our emotions. And our minds being greatly puzzled, and hugely distrustful, we long to know how this universe presents itself to other minds. How a man thinks about this extraordinary universe; how he considers he ou[illegible] to behave himself in it; what he regards [illegible] his proper attitude towards

his fellow-travellers in this universe: whether he imagines that he can ride rough-shod over them, or whether he considers that they too have rights, and that he must be just, generous, and even self-sacrificing — all these things interest us as much in the sportsman as in the artist. We want to know what manner of man he is.

It all comes back to *character;* not intellect or acumen or ability or penetration or foresight; just character. How a man should explain the phantasmagoria of Life, or how a man should propose to conduct himself in that phantasmagoria, these are the problems which both artist and sportsman strive to solve for us. — All unconsciously to themselves, mind you. Were they to do it consciously — or, shall I say, self-consciously — we should not so implicitly believe in them. A self-conscious artist is a contradiction in terms. So would be a self-conscious sportsman. Imagine a fox-hunter wondering what sort of a figure he cut as he galloped across country or took water! Imagine a golfer deliberately trying to be graceful the while he drave! Self-consciousness

means that the man — the artist, the sportsman — is not in earnest, is not really doing his best to see into the cosmos, to solve the problem or to play the game of life; is thinking more of himself than of this. — And so again it all comes back to character.

## VI

You can detect national character in games. Golf is preëminently the game of the Scot: slow, sure, quiet, deliberate, canny even — each man playing for himself. There is no defensive play, no attacking an enemy's position, no subordination of oneself to the team, no captain to be obeyed, no relative positions of players. Compare with it cricket, the game typical of the Anglo-Saxon of more southern proclivities. Here you have more excitement, greater rapidity of action. There is no serious and contemplative addressing of yourself to the ball; no terrible anxiety over your stance; no twenty-two rules for your slog. Golf, on the other hand, is self-reliant, silent, sturdy. It leans less on its fellows. It loves best to overcome obstacles alone. If the golfer takes a

caddie, it but proves him a member of a clan: his caddie is his fellow-clansman. Of the two, perhaps cricket is for youth the superior game. It requires as keen an eye, as accurate an adjustment of hand and eye, as great muscular power in the stroke, and it is more rapid. It must be played, too, as much as golf, "with the heid." In addition to this, in cricket you have an ally or allies, both in batting and fielding; it is communistic, political. The nation that evolved cricket evolved the British constitution.

Note, too, an you will, the nomenclature proper to golf. Where your blunt and careless Southron cricketer "slogs" or "blocks" or is "stumped," your Northern golfing precisian religiously takes his "stance," "addresses" himself to the ball, and "approaches" the hole;—a phraseology smacking of the Assembly of Divines. There is something Puritanically and Sinaitically threatening in the thought of "approaching" a hole; as if, puir aperture, it were not to be come at but after due preparation thereunto, and were altogether fenced off from the ignorant, the scandalous, and the profane. And so indeed it is: the hole is an ominous

and portentous ordinance, and often mightily inconveniently placed; and the duffer who thinks to enter therein without much searching of heart, without diligent use of all means suitable and answerable unto so high and serious a task, if he doth not thereby render himself liable to admonishment by his elders is nevertheless, in the matter of the "approach," still in the eenfancy of golf.

## VII

There is rampant in the world at the present moment a sort of sporting mania, an international sporting mania; excellent in its way, but very difficult to analyse or account for. Manias of one kind or another are not unknown to history. Such, for example, was the mania for Crusades in the Middle Ages. It had a highly rational basis, namely the defence of Christendom against Islam and the wresting of the Holy Land from its desecrating possessors. But to such lengths did this mania go that in the year 1212 an army of children once actually set out, with banners and paraphernalia, to conquer some vague,

invisible foe; with the result that hundreds died before they had gone any distance, and hundreds were sold into slavery. Such, too, was the Hippodrome mania in the fourth century at Byzantium, when feeling ran so high that society was divided into hostile sections, and money, and even blood, was recklessly spent in contests between the faction of the Green and the faction of the Blue. And such was the tulip mania of Holland in 1637, when, so keen was the rivalry for bulbs, that a whole nation was absorbed in the strife, and many a family ruined itself by speculation in rare or mythical roots.

Well, to-day the western world seems to be labouring under something of the same sort. Year by year athletics occupy a larger share of the attention, not only of the students, but of the teachers, at our schools and colleges, and year by year the sums spent in intercollegiate and international contests increase. To win a comparatively valueless cup by means of a comparatively unserviceable craft, a single individual spends some millions of sesterces, and two nations look on intent on the race and applaud. Teams without number, of all kinds,

cross and recross the Atlantic and Pacific; money is poured out like water on race-horses, motor-cars, dirigible balloons, biplanes, monoplanes, and what-not. — Like the Crusades, there is for all this a highly rational basis, that most laudable one of amicable rivalry in brain or muscle; but, like the Crusades, it is a question whether it is not here and there just a little overdone.

It is a question whether it would not be well if youth diverted more of its superfluous energy into channels more directly serviceable to the State. If every youth in the country took his share in strenuous and strengthening sports, if he "played the game," and developed his muscle and his "nerve," the State might be well served when it had occasion to call upon such muscle and nerve to defend it. But unfortunately, I am afraid, the majority of the young men of the country look on while others play — pay to look on, in fact, and sit still and shout and smoke and bet the while they look. — If only the State could invest "soldiering" with the attractiveness of which sport now holds the monopoly! I throw out that hint to the heads of the War Office.

Whence comes this rampancy of sport? What is its origin? Is it not largely due to the fact that for many generations the aristocratic and upper classes have devoted to athletic pass-times an undue proportion of time and money and thought? The Universities and the great Public Schools, and, in imitation of these, all the other schools, have for years put as much stress upon play as they have upon work. Schoolmasters have been chosen upon their athletic rather than upon their scholastic qualifications. Nevertheless, in spite of Matthew Arnold's gentle gibe (he called the upper classes "Barbarians"), so long as athletics were confined to the cultured and the leisured, sport was at all events properly conducted: if it took up too much of the time and energy of its votaries, at least all its votaries gained such physical and mental and moral benefits as accrued from it; betting was rare, and professionalism was strictly limited and defined. But now that Demos is receiving a State education free, Demos tries to copy his masters; and Demos being a myriad-headed monster, and there being room in the football field, on the diamond, and on the cricket

se, for only a limited number of players, the

greater part of Demos has perforce to look on while a few, for his delectation, play. Hence the spread of professionalism, hence the addiction to betting, hence many sinister results.

In the United States, where Demos has no master — where Demos *is* master — we see these results in their extremest form: there every player on every baseball team is a professional, and is paid a princely salary for playing. — Nay more, players are bought by rival cities striving for the pennant, as champion Clydesdales are bought, or Shorthorns, or Berkshire pigs.

Some day this rampancy of sport may become a very grave question indeed — as Mr. Kipling has already hinted. It was in the days of its decline that the populace of Rome clamoured for *Panem et Circenses*. The modern popular clamour for Pensions and Play may be ominous.

## VIII

And yet, why is it, let us ask ourselves, that mankind consents to hold prowess in sport in such high esteem? From the days of the Olympian and Isthmian games to the day of the latest broken record, always athletic ex-

cellence has elicited spontaneous admiration. To the champion, to him who excels in any kind of game, — the batsman, the oarsman, the boxer, — we look up with a certain sort of awe, an instinctive and mysterious sort of worship. The feeling is deep-seated and universal; it must have its roots far down in the foundations of human history and human nature.

Well, if my theory that all sport is but amicable combat is correct, prowess in games is proof and symbol of prowess in that inevitable and sempiternal combat of man with man and of man with nature without which neither would mankind as a whole have evolved, nor would special races of men have emerged and dominated the world. Men seem instinctively to understand that to excel in strength or agility means much more than possession of mere strength or agility; that it means staying-power, will, determination, courage — a host of, not only muscular, but mental and even moral qualities. In what loving, reverential remembrance how many of us amateur golfers hold the late Mr. F. G. Tait, though to so many of us he is known only by his portrait and his records at golf — and his sad but glorious end! How we have

apotheosized Tom Morris, the elder, he whom few of us now living ever saw play! What a Diomed of the links does Vardon seem! What an Ajax, Braid! In what high esteem we hold all the great men in golf! It was with quite serious, though perhaps shapeless, motives that the Greeks erected statues to their Olympian victors; motives identical probably with those that led to the deification of Herakles and Thor and of all the strong men of mythology.

What may be the particular weapon wielded by the champion matters little, whether bat or ball, boxing-glove, driver, or oar. The weapon is but the medium of his strength and skill, the vehicle of his thought and knowledge, that by which he gives evidence of his power. The weapon is to the sportsman what the brush is to the artist or the pen to the poet. It is that by which he shows to the world what manner of man he is.

What manner of man he is! That, surely, after all, is the question of questions. It is at the bottom of all religions, which fight among themselves in their theories as to what man's true nature is and how it shall be improved; it is at the bottom of all philosophies, which make

desperate and futile efforts to define man and to specify his place in the cosmos; in a way it is at the bottom of all art, since art tries to depict man, or if it depicts Nature, depicts man's conception of her; and it is at the very bottom of sport, than which only the mortal and immemorial conflict of man with man and of mankind with Nature, of which sport is but the symbol and analogue, is a better exponent of the true and secret character of man, his real and inner self.

## IX

This modern rampancy of sport does not explain the fascination of golf. No; but it may help to explain its existence. Golf is some hundreds of years old; but only in the last two or three decades has it obtained its extraordinary vogue. The interesting question is, Why is it that, amongst the thousand-and-one games to-day played by men, women, and children in Europe and America, why is it that golf commands so large a share of attention, of serious and thoughtful attention? The literature of golf is now immense, and, much of it, good. Eminent men have devoted to it serious study;

mathematicians try to solve its problems; prime ministers play it; multimillionaires resort to it; and grown men the world over jeopardize for it name and fame and fortune. Not even bridge quite so absorbs its votaries. Cricketers, footballers, tennis-players do not so utterly abandon homes and offices for the crease, the field, or the lawn. Only the golfer risks everything so he may excel in putting little balls into little holes. — What is the clue to the mystery?

The clue is a compound one. To begin with, it is threefold: physiological; psychological; social. — In the first place, no other game has so simple an object or one requiring, apparently, so simple an exertion of muscular effort. To knock a ball into a hole — that seems the acme of ease. It is a purely physiological matter of moving your muscles *so*, thus the tyro argues; and in order to move his muscles *so*, he expends more time and money and thought and temper than he cares, at the year's end, to compute. Without doubt the ball must be impelled by muscular movement: how to co-ordinate that muscular movement — that is the physiological factor in the fascination of golf.

In the second place, when the novice begins

to give some serious consideration to the game he discovers that there is such a thing as style in golf, and that a good style results in good golf. He begins to think there must be some recondite knack in the game, a knack that has to be learned by the head and taught by the head to the muscles. Accordingly he takes lessons, learns rules, reads books, laboriously thinks out every stroke, and by degrees comes to the conclusion that mind or brain has as much to do with the game as have hand and eye. — It is here that the psychological factor comes in.

In the third place, having progressed a bit, having learned with a certain degree of skill to manipulate his several clubs; having learned also, and being able with more or less precision to put into practice, certain carefully conned rules as to how he shall stand and how he shall swing, the beginner — for he is still a beginner — discovers that he has not yet learned everything. He discovers two things: first, that his own individual temperament and character have a quite extraordinary influence upon his style; and second, that the character and temperament of his opponent and the quality of his opponent's play exercise a most extraordinary influ-

ence over him. Does he go out with a greater duffer than himself, unconsciously he finds himself growing over-confident or careless. Does he go out with a redoubtable player, one whose name on the Club Handicap stands at Scratch, he cannot allay a certain exaltation or trepidation highly noxious to his game. And it is in vain that he attempts to reason these away. Not only so, but even after months of practice, when the exaltation or trepidation is under control, often it will happen that an opponent's idiosyncrasies will so thoroughly upset him that he will vow never to play with that idiosyncratic again. This we may call the social or moral element. It affects the feelings or the emotions; it affects the mind through these feelings or emotions; and, through the mind, it affects the muscles.

Now, I take it that there is no other game in which these three fundamental factors — the physiological, the psychological, and the social or moral — are so intimately combined or so constantly called into play. Some sports, such as football, polo, rowing, call chiefly for muscular activity, judgement, and nerve; others, such as chess, draughts, backgammon, call

upon the intellect only. In no other game that I know of is, first, the whole anatomical frame brought into such strenuous yet delicate action at every stroke; or, second, does the mind play so important a part in governing the actions of the muscles; or, third, do one's own character and temperament and the character and temperament of your opponent so powerfully affect you as they do in golf. To play well, these three factors in the game must be most accurately adjusted, and their accurate adjustment is as difficult as it is fascinating.

Not that a player need be sensibly conscious of the existence of these factors. To excel in a sport it is not necessary to analyse that sport — that, perhaps, is the function of the philosophical analyst. Yet I cannot but think that the enjoyment of a sport is materially enhanced by some such philosophical analysis; and I do further think that golf is a game worthy of philosophical analysis; — and, further still, that a man *could* improve his game by giving philosophical and analytical thought thereunto. Golf is a game that requires thought — quiet and deliberate thought. "Do not hurry; you will spoil your game," said once, when I was a be-

ginner, an old and experienced golfer to me as he waited at the tee. I did not understand the full meaning of that axiom then. I do now. To impress upon oneself the momentous importance of keeping the head steady, of fixing the eye upon the ball, of guarding against the swaying of the body, of timing the stroke, and of following through — even these simple things cannot be done if one rushes into the dressing-room, rushes out again, summons one's caddie, and strikes without ever pulling oneself together and recalling one by one, quietly, deliberately, the things one has to do, and how best they may be done. The youthful caddie might do them, so might a very experienced Pro; but only because both have so trained their minds and bodies, that, when they take their stance, mind and body work in unison. — But never yet did even Pro or caddie play a good game hurriedly.

If the curious reader asks for an explanation of this deleterious influence of hurry upon the stroke, he will find it by consulting these said philosophical analysts. Numerous learned men have devised numerous experiments to prove (what every duffer knows) that the amount of attention which the mind can give to any

particular business in hand is largely determined, amongst other things, by "the attitude toward the world in general that the individual has at that time." [1] But this perhaps is pretty obvious. Almost as obvious as the fact that hurry also disturbs the action of the heart and makes not only quiet attention but deliberate action impossible.

## X

All true games, I have said, are contests. But in golf the contest is not with your fellow-man. The foe in golf is not your opponent, but great Nature herself, and the game is to see who will over-reach her better, you or your opponent. In almost all other games you pit yourself against a mortal foe; in golf it is yourself against the world: no human being stays your progress as you drive your ball over the face of the globe. — It is very like life in this, is golf. Life is not an internecine strife. We are all here fighting, not against each other for our lives, but against Nature for our livelihoods. In golf we can see a symbol of the

[1] See W. B. Pillsbury's *Attention*, pp. 37 *et seq.* London: Sonnenschein. 1908.

history and fate of human kind: careering over the face of this open earth, governed by rigid rule, surrounded with hazards, bound to subdue Nature or ere we can survive, punished for the minutest divergence from the narrow course, and the end of it all. . . . And the end of it all? . . . To reach an exiguous grave with as few mistakes as may be — some with high and brilliant flight, others with slow and lowly crawl.

## XI

To descend, however, from this highly abstract plane, why is it, let us ask, that golf to so many of us seems to-day a game unique?

Well, amongst other things, it is unique because it is so difficult. Curiously enough, its chief difficulty arises from its chief simplicity. In golf you hit a stationary ball. At first blush that sounds the acme of ease. It is not; though it takes even a zealot some days to plumb the depths of that paradox. At first blush it would seem that a cricket ball — flying towards you, its trajectory foreshortened, its velocity variable, its pitch problematical, its break uncertain — would be of all balls the hardest to

hit; and the next hardest, seemingly, would be the racquet or the tennis ball. All three come fast, and you never know exactly whence they are coming or whither they are going. The difficulties in cricket, racquets, and tennis seem immense. Yet they are not as great as the difficulties in golf. If they were, we should surely ere this have been, in this analytical era, inundated with theoretic lucubrations as to how these should be played, as assuredly we have been in the matter of golf. Besides, no cricketer suffers agonies in debating with himself of the correctness of his stance, or of the character of his swing; or addresses himself with painful pause to the bowling; or waggles his implement with serious, not to say solemn, insistence; or requires from all spectators of his play the most awesome and reverential silence. What is there in the game of golf which so differentiates it from all others that in it these trifling minutiæ become magnified to matters of great moment? I take it it is because in golf the *mind* plays a highly curious and important rôle. In cricket, tennis, racquets, polo, the entire absence of such maxims as "Keep your eye on the ball," "Be up,"

"Slow back," "Follow through," "Don't go to sleep," and the rest of them — all addressed to the mind — shows that in these the mind requires no external or adventitious stimulus. Who would dream of taking his eye off an approaching ball in cricket? — who could do it? Who could possibly go to sleep in the midst of a rally in tennis? Evidently in these games the movement of the ball is sufficient stimulus in itself — it is *the* stimulus. Now, in golf there is no such stimulus, and the mind has to be goaded into attention and action — often by laborious and incessant iteration of mental formulæ dinned into the memory and repeated over and over again. (I know a man who repeats to himself six rules every time he takes his driver in hand and addresses the ball.) This is curious, but it is true; and perhaps the following train of reasoning will substantiate the assertion. No game can be played without accurate and delicate adjustment of hand and eye; this adjustment is primarily the function, through the nerves, of the mind; it cannot be achieved unless the mind is instantly and constantly stimulated to action; in all rapid games the movement of the ball

supplies this stimulus, for it excites the perceptive faculties, and, through them, the conceptive, by which the orders for the next stroke are issued; in golf there is little or no excitation of the perceptive faculties; accordingly the conceptive faculties have to be concentrated and roused to action by artificial and adventitious means, by precepts learned by rote and forcibly applied at every stroke. That is the psychology of golf. In all quick games, so strong and so rapid are the stimuli that the resulting movements might almost be called semi-voluntary. Volleying at the net in tennis might certainly be so called: there is no time to think; the very sight of the approaching ball concentrates the attention upon it and throws the right arm into position to strike it. To the expert tennis-player the movement is doubtless semi-voluntary, as semi-voluntary as the closing of the eyelid on the approach of a fly — though both, probably, are the result of constant response to stimulus. (I believe, in the technical language of the psychologist, the stroke in tennis would be classified as "secondary reflex" or "secondary automatic.") Now, in *golf* there is never any reflex or automatic

action possible. Every stroke must be played by the mind — gravely, quietly, deliberately. And this is why there is a psychology of golf but there is no psychology of cricket or racquets or tennis or polo. If for this theory it is necessary to show that strong stimulation of the perceptive faculties tends to strong stimulation of the conceptive, one might point to the effect of music upon the mind and body. How easy it is to dance when the rhythmic valse strikes upon the ear! what waves of thought and emotion are set agoing at sound of martial airs!

## XII

As a matter of fact most of the difficulties in golf are mental, not physical; are subjective, not objective; are the created phantasms of the mind, not the veritable realities of the course. Bad lies, on good links, are the exception, not the rule; and bunkers are avowedly where they are in order to catch the unworthy and the unwary. That wood to the right is no real obstacle to your drive; why then are you so fearful of a slice? Were you blindfold and could not see it, it would be as

if it were not, and the so-called "difficulty" would vanish. And yet the number of balls that do go into that wood — or are pulled off to the left to avoid it — is astonishing. —

I have known a man in his novitiate to put down twelve balls on a tee, and twelve consecutive times to fail to cross a valley less than one hundred yards in width. The difficulty lay, not in the valley, but in himself. He had the strength; if he had known it, he had the skill. He did not know; he mistrusted himself; and his mistrust was his obstacle. Could anything more clearly prove the immense importance of the psychological factor in golf?

Shall we inquire here for a moment why it is that self-confidence is so supremely efficacious a virtue in golf — as, indeed, it is in all life; when, that is, the self-confidence is legitimate and well founded and does not degenerate into foolhardiness or braggadocio? Well, mistrust means that you are not really attending to the matter in hand: you are wondering whether you are holding your club properly; you are wondering whether you will miss; *you* are in reality attending to quite other

things than the matter in hand; and as the thing to be done will not be done, cannot be done, unless the supreme centres of the attending mind attend to that one thing only, of course mistrust is fatal. Self-confidence allays this anxiety and inattention, and leaves the mind free to act as it ought to act, and to give the proper orders to the proper muscles. But self-confidence, during one's novitiate, is a virtue mighty hard to cultivate; a pity it is that so few novices realize that its cultivation is all-important. The mere test of strength or of skill is one of the most subordinate of the elements of golf; much more important is the test of this quiet self-confidence which no ghostly phantasms can disturb, in howsoever questionable shape they come. So many golfers forget this. "If I had not done this, that, or the other stupid thing," they say, "my score would have been so-and-so." My dear sir, it is just those stupid things that make the game. Eliminate the liability of the frail and peccant human mind to do stupid things, and you might as well play pitch and toss. It is this very frailty and peccability of the human mind that golf calls in question, and it is this that dif-

ferentiates golf from other games, because in golf this frailty is shown in its utter nakedness, not hidden away under cover of agility or excitement or concerted action, as it is in cricket or football or tennis or polo. The simplicity of the thing to be done strips the soul of all cloak of excuse for not doing it. You may place your ball how or where you like, you may hit it with any sort of implement you like; all you have to do is to hit it. Could simpler conditions be devised? Could an easier task be set? And yet, such is the extraordinary constitution of the human golfing soul, that it not only fails to achieve it, but invents for itself multiform and manifold ifs and ans for not achieving it; ifs and ans the nature and number of which must assuredly move the laughter of the gods. . . .

I have often thought that golf was the invention of the de—— well, let us say, of the deities of Olympus, an invention contrived for a twofold purpose: first, to afford them subject-matter for merriment; and second, to prove to vaunting man how trivial a creature he is. In my mind's eye I can see brawny Zeus, with stout Hera at his side (she must be inclining

to *embonpoint* by this time), lying beside his nectar and watching puny men chasing pygmy balls over this paltry planet. What inextinguishable laughter must ring through the Sacred Mount at sight of grave statesmen and puissant potentates, mighty satraps and great proconsuls, Right Reverends and Right Honourables, striving strenuously to put little pieces of india-rubber into little holes in the ground, and "damnin' awfu'" when they don't!

## XIII

However, probably neither the youthful caddie nor the elderly professional is much given to any very minute analysis of the mental factors incident to golf. It is only he who takes up golf when well past his 'teens who finds that the motor centres have carefully to be taught and trained by the ideational centres; and probably not until the motor centres have learned to act largely by themselves does such golfer improve in his game. Probably, the more automatically one plays, the better one plays — which means that (unless one is a born athlete, or a muscular genius) one ought

to commence golf very young indeed. (Zealous golfers had better enter their babies' names on the waiting-lists of limited clubs.) For I take it that if the mind is strenuously occupied in trying to remember this, that, or the other particular rule for the stroke, some other rules are apt to be forgotten. This is to say, if the ideational or conceptual centres of the brain are too much occupied, some motor centres go disregarded. In the caddie and the professional probably at the moment of the stroke there is no ideation or conception going on whatsoever, the whole attention of the mind being in some incomprehensible way concentrated on the motor centres alone. All beginners — of a maturer age — find it impossible to remember — and obey — at every stroke all the rules they learn. — "What on earth," said one fair golfer to another once, "do you wear that ring on your thumb for?" — "To remind me of a certain rule." — "Good gracious!" said the other, "*I* should have to wear rings on my fingers and bells on my toes to remind me of all the rules I forget!"

I asked an admirable professional once, a man whose skill in tuition equalled his skill

with the clubs, who thought out each stroke and excelled in the ætiology and diagnosis of the faults of his pupils, — I asked this professional to try to tell me precisely what it was that passed through his mind in that important but minute interval of time which elapsed between the raising of his club for the back-swing and its impact with the ball. He promised to do his best to find out, and his answer was as significant as it was practical. "I canna find oot, Sorr," he said some days afterwards; "I dinna think I think aboot anything at a'. I juist luke at me ba'. Ef I do not luke at me ba', the struke disna coom aff." Of an amateur to whom I put the same quæry, the reply was to the effect that if his mental attitude was at all reducible to verbal phraseology, it would probably take the form of the prayer of that Publican who did not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

In one respect the professional and the caddie have an immense advantage over the amateur in golf: they are handling golf-clubs all day long; if they are not swinging them, they are making or mending them; they do

nothing that tends to develope any set of muscles other than those brought into play in the game. And this is no unimportant point. The amateur rides or rows or shoots or yachts or fishes. Now, it may be a preposterous thing to assert, a thing that may arouse the derision of all but enthusiasts of the game, but it is highly probable that any form of exercise which brings into play and developes muscles not used in golf, or not used in the way that golf uses them, is injurious, not beneficial, to the golfer. If neither a violinist nor a pianist would dream of developing the muscles of his forearm and wrist by, say, hoeing or digging, neither should a golfer. I once knew a man who for a whole snowy winter did not touch a club, but daily visited a gymnasium and went through a variety of exercises for the express purpose of developing his muscles for his summer's golf — his ambition was long driving. What was the consequence? He confessed to me that that summer he was completely off his game! Another man I knew whose sole form of exercise that winter was walking and swinging golf-clubs. This man's game improved vastly. The explanation probably lies

in the fact that the nerve-currents by which the muscles are contracted are very prone to run in the tracks to which they are habituated; and if for several weeks or months they are made to travel in paths quite different from those in which they must run — and swiftly and accurately run — in the drive and the approach and the putt, when they are ordered to take the new direction they fail at first to find it. No stoker or coal-heaver could suddenly become a card-engraver; and if a card-engraver took to stoking or coal-heaving, he would probably turn out very unsaleable visiting-cards when first he returned to his vocation. Everybody has noticed, too, how persistently the cricketing stroke sticks to the cricketer who drops cricket for golf in maturer years; and I have actually heard a man complain of the evil effects wrought upon his game by a few weeks' canoeing. — This anatomical frame of ours is a wonderful machine; we little know what slaves we are to it. —

The curious thing about golf is that adepts in all sorts of other and alien forms of sport think that there is no reason under heaven why they should not compel their anatomical

frames to comply with the demands made upon them by the links. They excel, so they argue, in cricket or tennis or racquets, why not in this ridiculously easy task of putting a ball into a hole? And when they fail, they become exasperated — and spend pounds in lessons — and pounds in implements of curious make — goose-necked putters, Schenectady putters, socket-headed drivers, Dreadnought drivers, aluminium cleeks, reinforced cleeks, of these the name is Legion! There is not a game known to sportsmen in which failure so exasperates. Nay, it is not a game, if by "game" we mean a mere pass-time. Or, if it is, it is a method of passing the time than which few serious vocations so absorb the faculties, mental, moral, and physical; or (shall we say?) so develope them. At least it is a game in which earnestness, that moral attribute of character which seems nowadays sometimes in serious danger of disparagement, in which earnestness ranks so high that, we may safely say, without it success is impossible. — I once heard of a lady champion who, in solitude, wept in sheer nervous tension over her victory. — All honour to her tears! No wonder she was a champion!

## XIV

However, after all this abstruse metaphysical and anatomical disquisition, shall we essay to discover practically, what it is at bottom makes a man play well and what it is makes a man play ill; and what it is makes a man one day play well, and the next day ill?—Ah! he who could answer such quæries would tear the veil from Maia. Some men there be, of course, who will never play golf. Either they have a poor "eye"; or their muscular sense is but imperfectly developed; or their keenness in sport is nil; or they are too much taken up with the things of this world; or they are men wrapt up in the contemplation of so-called higher things. University professors I have known who, when they ought to have had their eye upon the ball, had their eye upon the clouds, and their minds farther off still. Other men I have known to whom a round of golf was so casual and frivolous a pass-time that they would seek to relieve the tædium of the game (and perhaps entertain you!) by the narration between strokes of interminable and pointless anecdotes. Never by such men will the Royal and Antient Game be

properly played. By such men golf may be given up at once and for ever. For, maugre all appearances to the contrary, golf is one of the most serious of sports. As well try to study metaphysics indifferently, or to attack the feminine heart indiscreetly, as try to play golf listlessly. One cannot serve golf and Mammon. Golf is the most jealous of mistresses. Are you worried and distrait; are you in debt and expecting a dun; are stocks unsteady and your margin small; is a note falling due; or has a more than ordinarily delicate feminine entanglement gone somewhat awry? Go not near the links. Take a country walk, or go for a ride; drop into the Club and talk to your friends; — do anything rather than attempt the simple task of putting a little ball into a little hole. For to put that little ball into that little hole — or rather into those eighteen little holes — requires. . . . Requires what? Alas! so many things, so many unthought-of things. It requires, in the first place, a mind absolutely imperturbed, imperturbable. You may play chess or bridge or polo or poker on the eve of bankruptcy; I defy you to play golf on the eve of a curtain lecture. It ›s a strong character to play strong golf.

Golf is as accurate an ethical criterion of a man as is the Decalogue. Perhaps this is why your rigid and puritanical Scots Presbyterian often plays so admirably. An eminent Scots philosopher once told me that the eminence of Scottish philosophy (note the Scot his appraisal of things Scottish, an you will) was due to the fact that Scots philosophers were brought up on the Shorter Catechism. I venture to think he might have extended his axiom to the St. Andrews game. — But, not to beat about the bush, this much is certain: golf is a game in which attitude of mind counts for incomparably more than mightiness of muscle. Given an equality of strength and skill, the victory in golf will be to him who is Captain of his Soul. Give me a clear eye, a healthy liver, a strong will, a collected mind, and a conscience void of offence both toward God and toward men, and I will back the pygmy against the giant. Golf is a test, not so much of the muscle, or even of the brain and nerves of a man, as it is a test of his inmost veriest self; of his soul and spirit; of his whole character and disposition; of his temperament; of his habit of mind; of the entire content of his mental and moral nature as

handed down to him by unnumbered multitudes of ancestors. Does his pedigree date back to Romantic heroes — Frankish horsemen or Provençal Knights? Let him see to it that he curbs his impulsive Southern ardour. Does he trace his descent to the Vikings of the North, strenuous sea-kings that roamed afar and devastated foreign shores? Let him see to it that he applies himself to tasks more close at hand, that he wins him nearer victories. Is he a stolid Goth, bull-necked and big of loin? Let him see to it that the more agile-witted Kelt does not wrest victory from him by a deftness more delicate.

## XV

But all this, again, is vague, theoretic, abstruse. What you, my confidential reader, seek, I know, is some simple, intelligible, practicable rule by which to determine how you, when you telegraph to an opponent and propose a match, shall be able to play transcendently well. What is it, precisely, that will enable you to go round under eighty to-day? — Confidential reader, did ever you hear tell of the elixir of life? Did ever you hear tell of the universal solvent? of the

philosopher's stone? of the Sphinx her riddle? or of Fortunatus his cap? Mayhap you have. But mayhap you do not know that the secret of success in golf is more recondite, far more recondite, than is any one of these. These be bagatelles compared with that. A greater fortune awaits him who will discover and divulge the mystery of golf than that which awaits him who will square the circle, explain the potentialities of radium, or solve the problem of the perpetuity of motion. — For, mark you, it is not against the fellow-man his human opponent that the golfer really wars. Nor is it even against Bogey that he pits his skill. The contest is with himself. There is no reason known amongst men why any golfer should ever get into a bunker. He knows, or he thinks he knows, exactly how every stroke in the round should be played. He may carry as many clubs as he likes, clubs of the most flagitious and flamboyant make. Most potent, grave, and reverend seigniors will stand stockstill and dumb the while he drives; and no thing on this terraqueous globe be permitted to impede his play. A sanguine flag gratuitously points out for him the hole; overtly printed on the sand-box or the score-card is the

distance; his blameless ball (over the making of which countless rival manufacturers have expended an ingenuity extreme) lies meekly at his feet — could Nature, or Art, or the Invention of Man farther go to expedite his way? It is Nature, it is Bogey, that are handicapped, not he; — and perchance it is the cognizance of the enormity of the responsibility thus laid upon him that appals the timorous golfer. The conditions are simple in the extreme: to knock a ball into a hole; and damp sand, and mown fields, and rolled greens, and caddie, and professional, and flag — to say nothing of cobbler's-wax, and resin, and chalk, and hob-nails, and a red coat — contribute to aid him in coping with his foe. — Against whom do you contend if not against yourself?

Ah! But the conditions are the same for your opponent also. There's the rub. He too, therefore, wages a warfare against self. Accordingly golf resolves itself into this:—It is not a wrestle with Bogey; it is not a struggle with your mortal foe; it is a physiological, psychological, and moral fight with yourself; it is a test of mastery over self; and the ultimate and irreducible element of the game is to

determine which of the players is the more worthy combatant. You try to prove to your opponent that you are a better man than he; and your opponent tries to prove to you that he is a better man than you; and the ordeal is decided by competition with a mutual and ideal foe, a foe merciless and implacable, a foe impeccable and impartial, and that will by no means clear the guilty. Golf is the refined modern equivalent of the ancient barbarous Ordeal. To support our claims to superiority to-day, we do not walk blindfold and barefoot over nine red-hot ploughshares, we invite our opponent to beat us in putting a ball into eighteen holes; and we look to Pan — in the shape of bunkers and hazards — to Defend the Right; and Pan is as inexorable as the ploughshares.

## XVI

Golf seems to bring the man, the very inmost man, into contact with the man, the very inmost man. In football and hockey you come into intimate — and often forcible enough — contact with the outer man; chess is a clash of intellects; but in golf character is laid bare

to character. This is why so many friendships — and some enmities — are formed on the links. In spite of the ceremony with which the game is played: the elaborate etiquette, the punctilious adhesion to the honour, the enforced silence during the address, the rigid observance of rules, few if any games so strip a man of the conventional and the artificial. In a single round you can sum up a man, can say whether he be truthful, courageous, honest, upright, generous, sincere, slow to anger — or the reverse. — Of these arcana of golf the uninitiated onlooker knows nothing. Yet if ever that onlooker is initiated into these Eleusinian mysteries, he changes his mind and sees in the links a school for the disciplinary exercise of a cynical or stoical self-command rivalling that of the Cynosarges or the Porch.

Not only is golf an excellent test of character, it is also an excellent medicament for character. Did we only know it, there is a whole pharmacopœia between sand-box and flag. The volatile can find, if he will, a sedative; the phlegmatic, an alterative; the neurasthenic, a tonic. And it is a test of character in more ways than one: the cheat simply could not play golf: in the last

resort, no one would play with him. It is also a test of tact. Many a man has to learn how to lend a deaf ear politely to a loquacious friend, or to curb his own tongue when playing with a taciturn one; and probably there is no one but has had on some occasion or other to keep his own temper sweet while the atmosphere about him was mephitic with a surly silence or rent by vituperative abuse.

— And has anything like this ever happened to you? Have you ever, after a hard day's work, having actually and conscientiously read and corrected and signed your last dictated letter, gone out to your links jubilant and expectant, with a good game in view and a good caddie booked, and thus going, have you ever met a pet friend returning from the said links and been greeted by him by a semi-surly and wholly-grumpy nod? If so, do not imagine that you have offended him; do not imagine that he has found against you some deep-seated and unpardonable ground of offence; nor even that you have inadvertently done that which has ruptured a lifelong friendship for ever. For, in all probability, your pet friend has simply played a bad game; has probably been taking his eye off his

ball. And *you* know how a series of foozles tends to upset the mental and the moral balance of a sane and rational man. — Besides, are you quite sure that *you* have not been sometimes the surly and grumpy one returning from the links? I am quite sure I have — and here, with keen contrition, I record my penitence for my faults.

And yet why, *why* does a badly-played game so upset a sane and rational man? You may lose at bridge, you may be defeated in chess, you may recall lost chances in football or polo; you may remember stupid things you did in tennis or squash racquets; you may regret undue haste in trying to secure an extra run or runs in cricket. But the mental depression caused by these is temporary and evanescent. Why do foozles in golf affect the whole man? — Humph! It is no use blinking matters. Say what the scoffers may, to foozle at golf — to take your eye off your ball, cuts right down to the very deeps of the human soul. It does: there is no controverting that. . . . Perhaps this is why Golf is worth writing about.

## XVII

The two best schools for mind and manners, says the sage, are the Court and the Camp. He might have added a third. He who would attain self-knowledge should frequent the links. If one seriously attempts the task, one will "find oneself" in golf. Few things better reveal a man to himself than zealous and persistent efforts to decrease his handicap. That profound and ancient maxim γνῶθι σεαυτόν, a maxim so ancient and profound that Juvenal averred it had descended from heaven (*Sat.* xi, 27), might be inscribed on the portal of every Golf Club. Even it might be said that Tennyson's trinity of excellences, self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control, are nowhere so worthily sought, or so efficacious when found, as on the links. — To the Greeks this will be foolishness; to golfers a platitudinous truism.

For golf must be played "conscientiously" — so an eminent King's Counsel once remarked to me. He was right. The duffer imagines that at the very most it only requires a good "hand and eye" and some sort of knack. A good eye and a very large amount of skill it

certainly does need; but he who thinks that these are the Alpha and Omega of golf will be apt to remain a duffer long. Between this Alpha and this Omega is a whole alphabet. Golf requires the most concentrated mental attention. It requires also just as concentrated a moral attention. The moral factors in the game are as important as the physical. He who succumbs to temptation will have to succumb to defeat. *Satis imperat*, says an old adage, *qui sibi est imperiosus:* he rules enough who rules himself. This should be the motto of every golfer. "If one man conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men," says the Dhammapada, with oriental extravagance, "and if another conquer himself, he is the greatest of conquerors" — a text which is brought home to one in every round. "Greater," said Solomon, "is he that ruleth himself than he that taketh a city." In golf the ruler of himself will take many a hole. — And in truth the golfer knows this, and many and curious sometimes are the means he adopts to attain this end. Every reader will recall the idiosyncrasies of his friends, even if he cannot recall his own: how one will regale himself on stout and steak, and another

lunch off chicken and tea; how Robinson will order a tankard of ale, and Anderson a tumbler of Scotch; how Bibulus will challenge Asceticus to take another helping of pudding, and Asceticus respond by challenging Bibulus to wash it down with liqueur; how Fumosus will smoke cigars or cigarettes the whole round through, and Abstemius resolutely leave his pipe in his locker; how Medicus will seek by diet or drugs to eliminate this or that unheard-of acid from his frame, and Hereticus live high to accomplish the same purpose. — The cellar and the pantry of a Golf Club, an they would, could divulge many a tale! And all, what for? To "bring under," as St. Paul saith, this peccant body of ours, or to brace this puny soul of ours to the conflict so that we shall not "beat the air," as saith St. Paul again.

Yes, golf must be played conscientiously. Recklessness never pays in golf. It may once in a great while bring off a thundering drive or an accidentally brilliant approach; but in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand it gives your opponent the hole. Few things prove this necessity for conscientiousness more than the disastrous results which always

follow a yielding to that fatal temptation to "press," to force your stroke, that is, to try to go farther than you can. One moment's consideration will tell you that you must hit accurately, not wildly; yet player after player, at hole after hole, omits that moment's consideration; hits with all his might; and — perhaps goes fifty yards. I have seen him go six inches. I have seen him not go at all, though no doubt the solid earth received a jar. My learned friend was right. The game must be played with a resolute determination not to yield to temptation.

This is why the books tell you always to take the honour at the first tee if you win it, and always to keep the lead if you can; inasmuch as a terrific drive by your opponent is so apt to cause you to forget that determination and to try to outdrive him — which always means to "press." And temptations like this crop up all through the game, all through the game. Thousands of matches have been lost by nothing more or less than pressing; thousands perhaps won by avoidance of that sin. — I know a hale, hearty, kindly septuagenarian who stands high up in the Club Handicap, far above many men many years his junior. Why? Because he never

presses. He cannot drive very far; but he never tries to. It never disconcerts him to be "away." He never objects to taking two strokes to your one. He never makes distance. But he always goes straight. And — he is one of the hardest men to beat I ever met.

It would be interesting here to attempt an analysis of "pressing." But William Park, Jr., has done that for us already.[1] Pressing, really, is putting in the power at the wrong time. You could hit as hard as you liked if you hit accurately and at the right time; but the man who "presses" is the man who puts in the power too soon. He is in too great a hurry. He begins the hit before the club-head has come anywhere near the ball. He does not exactly overdo anything; he does what he ought not to do. —

There are more "Don't's" in golf than there are in any other avocation in life. I put a few Don't's down here: —

1. Don't hurry — either before the game — or during the game — or after the game; otherwise you will contract the habit.

[1] *The Game of Golf.* By William Park, jun., Champion Golfer, 1887–1889. Page 102. London: Longmans. 1896.

2. Don't hurry your stroke: time is of the essence of the impact.

3. Don't mind who your opponent may be; and

4. Don't watch your opponent: you are playing your game; let him play his.

5. Don't worry about your caddie. He may be an irritating little wretch; but for eighteen holes he is your caddie; accordingly

6. Don't lose your temper — about anything, anything whatsoever. If you lose your temper, you lose everything — self-control, self-respect, judgement, equanimity, decency of language, — and, of course, the hole, and probably the game.

7. Don't watch the pair behind — even if they drive into you. You can complain afterwards.

8. Don't experiment — unless you are in desperate difficulty — or are dormy.

9. Don't talk. If your opponent talks,

10. Don't listen to your opponent. Edge away from him. If your caddie talks,

11. Don't listen to your caddie; shut him up.

12. Don't fuss. Fussiness is inimical to seriousness.

13. Don't fidget. Fidgetiness is inimical to steadiness.

14. Don't argue. The rules are the rules. A moot point can be reserved.

15. Don't debate — even with yourself: there is the hole: there are your clubs.

16. Don't hesitate. Hesitation evinces weakness, and your opponent will notice it.

17. Don't be too polite; and

18. Don't be too sympathetic: golf is a combat.

19. Don't be cast down: it spoils one's game. On the other hand,

20. Don't be elated: that, too, spoils one's game. — Whether you are "up" or whether you are "down,"

21. Don't vary your game.

22. Don't put on airs. Lastly, and above all,

23. Don't take your eye off your ball — never. And, when the game is over,

24. Don't complain or explain.

## XVIII

The thousand and one things that we should *not* do in golf are evidence of the difficulties of the game. In no other game must immense strength go hand in hand with extreme delicacy. If a fraction of a square inch of wood or steel does not come in contact with a fraction of a cubic inch of gutta-percha exactly *so* and not otherwise, you are landed in a bunker, or you fly off to one side, or you overrun the hole. And in every stroke in golf this nicety of accuracy is necessary. If in the drive the whole weight and strength of the body, from the nape of the neck to the soles of the feet, are not transferred from body to ball, through the minute and momentary contact of club with ball, absolutely surely, yet swiftly — you top, or you pull, or you sclaff, or you slice, or you swear (let us hope episcopally: which, being interpreted, according to the anecdote, signifieth silently). So with the putt. Not even an expert dare be careless of his stance or his stroke even for the shortest of putts. And as to that mashie shot, where you loft high over an abominable bunker and fall dead with a

back spin and a cut to the right on a keen and declivitous green — is there any stroke in any game quite so delightfully difficult as that?

Not only is the stroke in golf an extremely difficult one, it is also an extremely complicated one, more especially the drive, in which its principles are accentuated. It is in fact a subtile combination of a swing and a hit; the "hit" portion being deftly incorporated into the "swing" portion just as the head of the club reaches the ball, yet without disturbing the regular rhythm of the motion. The whole body must turn on the pivot of the head of the right thigh-bone working in the cotyloidal cavity of the *os innominatum* or pelvic bone, the head, right knee, and right foot remaining fixed, with the eyes riveted on the ball. In the upward swing, the vertebral column rotates upon the head of the right femur, the right knee being fixed; and as the club-head nears the ball, the fulcrum is rapidly changed from the right to the left hip, the spine now rotating on the left thigh-bone, the left knee being fixed; and the velocity is accelerated by the arms and wrists, in order to add the force of the muscles to the weight of the body, thus

gaining the greatest impetus possible. Not every professional instructor has succeeded in putting before his pupil the correct stroke in golf in this anatomical exposition. "Juist swoop her awa', maister," says one instructor. "*Hit* ut, mon," says another. Both are right, but such apparently discordant admonitions puzzle the neophyte.

The complexity of the anatomical and physiological processes necessary for the drive — indeed for every stroke — in golf is truly terrifying. The club-head has to describe two curves — an upward and a downward. The combined length of these curves must, in the drive, on the average, be nearly forty feet. Lady Margaret Scott's drive must have been considerably longer than this. The curves too must be described absolutely evenly and smoothly, and the velocity of the club in the descent must be accelerated by minute but rapid gradations. All this is done by the contraction of tens of thousands of muscular fibrils obeying orders issued by tens of thousands of nerve-centres scattered all over the body — in the brain, the medulla, the spinal rd, the numberless neurones embedded in

every portion of the anatomical frame; orders not issued all at once, but one after another — also absolutely evenly and smoothly — at intervals probably of tens of thousandths of a second. If the curves are not precise, if a single muscle fails to respond, if the timing is in the minutest degree irregular — the stroke is a failure. No wonder it is difficult.

This complexity of movement, I take it, is one of the chiefest of the difficulties in golf, and the one hardest to be surmounted by the unyouthful novice. No stroke in any other game is quite like it, so that proficiency in other games is neither a criterion of, nor a preparation for, proficiency in golf.

## XIX

However, complex as is the character of the stroke, one comfortable thing there is about golf: unlike other games, it does not need any excessive training. You need not reduce your weight, as you must for steeple-chasing; you need not be desperately careful about your wind, as you must be if you are entering for the half-mile or the mile. The heavy-weight and the

light-weight are evenly matched on the links. Indeed, an illustrious exponent of the game has said in print that it is as well that the golfer should pursue his ordinary mode of living, that he should make no extraordinary variation from his regular regimen. If he is accustomed to his pipe and his glass, well and good. So far so good. But there is this to be said. Golf above all things needs the steadiest of nerves, the clearest eye, and the most imperturbable of brains. If you are given to burning the midnight oil over books, — or bridge, — the odds will be against you on the links. If you are given to the steadying of your nerves by the imbibition of "nips," you will sometimes find those nerves terribly run down before the eighteenth tee. If you attempt to clear your eye by what the doctors call the "exhibition" of medicaments, you will sometimes find those medicaments affecting more than your eye. Games, I know, have now and again been won under the influence of adventitious aids; but as a rule these are ruinous to one's play. Nothing finds out sooner and better whether the human machine is in good working rder than does golf. Perhaps, as a matter of

fact, golf is more exacting than a steeple-chase or the half-mile: it tries endurance; it tries the judgement; it tries the temper. In golf this human machine of ours is put to the severest test; and if it has been overworked or abused, it is more than likely to break down between the teeing-ground and the green.

## XX

Yet not a little has been said, in a semi-sarcastic way, by devotees of other games than golf, about the comparative ease with which — as the sayers aver — a stationary ball can be, or should be, struck, as compared with one in motion. These detractors forget the nicety of the stroke that is required. A tennis-player has a whole court into which to play; a cricketer a whole field; the golfer has to put his ball into a hole of the size of a jam-pot, a quarter of a mile away. Indeed, the difficulties of golf are innumerable and incalculable. Take, for example, that simple rule, "keep your eye on the ball." It is unheard of in tennis; it is needless in cricket; in golf it is iterated and reiterated times without number — and infringed

as often as repeated. Yet not everybody, I think, knows the reasons of the tendency to infringe it. There are many reasons, very many. For example, one of them is this: As anatomists know, the crystalline lens in the eye automatically accommodates itself, by means of the ciliary muscle, to the focus of the object looked at. Now, many players get into the habit of looking intently at the flag, then suddenly reverting their gaze to their ball and striking before the lens has adapted itself to the new and nearer focus, with the result that they see the ball indistinctly and hit inaccurately. It is not that one does not *look* at one's ball; it is that one does not take time to look properly. To prove my theory, let any one gaze steadfastly at a distant object and then quickly direct the eye to one close to one's face. To learn that it requires time for the outlines of the latter to grow definite and distinct will be a lesson he will find invaluable on the links.

But indeed upon this all-important and fundamental rule, "Keep your eye on the ball," there might be written, by him who had ability the task, a whole psychological essay, such

as would tax the researches of a Höffding or a Wundt; for in this rule is comprised all the law and the prophets. — Such niceties as whether you should look rather at the grass behind your ball than at the ball, or at what particular part of your ball you should look for a particular kind of shot, I do not discuss here; are they not all written in the book of "The Complete Golfer?" [1] In itself, the injunction seems simplicity itself; to the practical carrying out thereof there are obstacles all but insuperable. I have touched on the difficulties incident to the focussing of the crystalline lens; yet these, compared with obstacles less obvious, are nearly negligible — at least to youth. To youth the focussing of the crystalline lens is happily not only automatic, but instantaneous; 'tis age has to be patient and circumspect — in golf as in all things else: youth cuts the Gordian knot; age, poor age, saws through it. — But I digress.

One of the chiefest impediments to a rigid observance of this, the chiefest of rules, lies in the fact that almost always the unpractised golfer has an incontinent desire to see whither his

[1] By Harry Vardon. London: Methuen and Co. 1905.

ball is going before even he has hit it. The desire may be natural, but, without the shadow of a doubt, to indulge it is fatal. James Braid in his "How to Play Golf" has found for this desire an ingenious explanation. "The fact seems to be," he says, "that the mind, and the optic nerve through it, works rather more quickly than the arms and the body." It may be so. This mind of man is a highly culpable entity, and the optic nerve should have more sense than to yield to its demands.

## XXI

How culpable an entity the mind is the following true narrative will show. — I had a little conversation recently with one of the most scrupulously careful of players; a gentleman who, during his pupilage at all events, read book upon book on golf, and laboriously endeavoured to carry out the precepts therein contained; who at every tee spent an interminable period of valuable time in planting his feet, measuring his distance, making sure of the grip of each particular digit of each particular hand; in waggling, and considering,

and taking thought with himself before actually making his stroke. (There really ought to be a time-limit for the address.) I had a little conversation with this gentleman. He had been last year somewhat off his game, and had recently been taking lessons. "And what," said I, "does your Professional say is the matter?" "Well," was the answer, somewhat hesitatingly enunciated, "he says I am taking my eye off the ball." — If these things are done in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry?

Men, too, have I known, not a few, who resort to adventitious aids by which to thwart the nefarious designs of this culpable mind. Only last week a golfer of repute, in the smoking-room of my club, frankly confessed that he took a caddie, not so much for the purpose of carrying his clubs, as because, when he had a caddie, he was less apt to take his eye off his ball. — How peccant, how very peccant, human nature is! The mind of man, so it seems, even when most intent on the most important business in hand, is so indisciplinable, so incorrigible, so ungovernable by the owner of that mind himself, that that owner has per-

force artificially to avoid a temptation which he feels he cannot resist.

## XXII

Again, curiously enough, if you impress upon yourself too anxiously this maxim calling upon you to look at your ball, you will find yourself deprived of the power to look at it at all, as a man who tries to count his own pulse unconsciously perturbs it. Your eye wanders back and forth; you look at the top of the abiding sphere; you look at its back; often you look at your club instead of at your ball. As a matter of fact, instead of *looking*, you are *thinking;* and to *think*, when you ought to *play*, is the madness of mania.

There is a very simple anatomical reason for this inability to see your ball when you are thinking instead of looking. Everybody has heard the phrase, "a vacant stare." Well, there actually is such a thing as a vacant stare. When one's thoughts are absorbed in something other than the object looked at, the eyes lose their convergence; that is to say, instead of *the two* eyeballs being turned inwards and

focussed on the thing, they look straight outwards into space; with the result, of course, that the thing looked at is seen indistinctly. I am convinced that this happens to many a grown-up golfer. He *thinks* he is looking at his ball, but as a matter of fact he is *thinking about* looking at his ball (a very different affair), or about how he is going to hit it, or any one of a hundred other things; and, his mind being taken off that supreme duty of doing nothing but *look*, the muscles of the eye are relaxed, the eyeballs resume their natural position and stare vacantly into space. "We must *will* to see," says the great psychologist Höffding, without the remotest cognizance of the extreme applicability of this maxim to the game of golf — and without, apparently, we may add, the remotest cognizance of the extreme corroboration which the game of golf gives to this maxim, "we must *will* to see, in order to see aright." [1]

We must *will* to look. That is to say, before we leave the club-house, before we take driver

[1] *Outlines of Psychology.* By Harald Höffding. Translated by Mary E. Lowndes. Page 95. London: The Macmillan Co. 1904. The italics are Höffding's.

in hand, we must quietly, sedately, soberly, impress upon ourselves this little fact, that at every stroke, at every stroke throughout the match, we must *will* to look, really and attentively to look, at the ball. — As a matter of fact, golf is the most rigid tester of will-power in the world. It is this makes it so interesting. It is this makes it so important. It is this makes it so educative, so edifying. For it does edify: that is, build up: it builds up character, because it strengthens will-power: for will-power is the foundation of character.

## XXIII

To go back: every one knows how easy it is to receive sense-impressions innumerable without attending to them. Indeed it is a curious fact that any one of the senses seems to be able to receive impressions of which the mind, if otherwise occupied, takes no cognizance whatsoever. A myriad objects can throw their images on the fundus of the eye and yet be practically invisible if the mind is in contemplative, not in observant mood. The eye may be said to "see," but the man cannot be said to "look."

Just so does many a golfer look at his ball. Did he only know it, he is not "looking" at all. His eye-balls may be directed towards the sphere, but his mind is wandering elsewhere.— Which leads me to another point. As anatomists know, the retina is not equally sensitive throughout its entire area. The most sensitive spot is the *macula lutea*, or yellow spot. To see a thing perfectly distinctly that thing must throw its image on that spot. This is why we hold a book squarely before the face, exactly at right angles to the plane of the face. Not only so, but it seems that to see a thing perfectly distinctly, and to attend to the image of that thing with concentrated attention, the eyes must look squarely out of the face. Who could read a difficult and small-print book with lowered lids and downcast eyes? Well, many a golfer tries to look at his ball with lowered lids and downcast eyes. If that all-important little rule, Keep your Eye upon the Ball, means anything at all, it means keep it on the ball so that the ball is distinctly seen *and attended to*. One should watch one's ball as a cat watches a mouse. — No cat watches a mouse with downcast eyes or with a vacant gaze; and no cat, while it is

watching a mouse, is thinking of anything else. — Ah! there is a depth of meaning in this little six-worded rule. I wonder whether that unknown but immortal genius who crystallised this adamantine axiom into this sexiverbal phrase himself quite understood what portentous though elemental truths he was consolidating into a single sentence!

## XXIV

But in truth this little puzzle of how to keep one's eye on the ball, and to be cognizant of nothing but the ball while keeping it there, may be said to possess a little psychology all its own. We "perceive" an object, say the psychologists, when not only "our attention is drawn" to that object, but when "all the other impressions that are exciting sensations at the same moment fall into the field of inattention" [1] — in plain words when we are oblivious of everything but the thing perceived. It is this inattention or oblivion that the golfer has most carefully to practise. If during that minute interval of time which elapses between the commencement of

[1] See Felix Clay, *The Origin of the Sense of Beauty. Page 83.* London: Smith, Elder, and Co. 1908.

the upward swing of the club and its impact with the ball, the golfer allows any one single sensation, or idea, to divert his attention — consciously or unconsciously — from the little round image on his retina, he does not properly "perceive" that ball; and of course, by consequence, does not properly hit it. Unfortunately, always and in all circumstances, a multiplicity of sensations and feelings and ideas are clamouring for attention. There are nerves all over the body, — and inside the body, — and the mind is ceaselessly, not only receiving impressions from these nerves, but issuing orders through other nerves. If, for example, I, at this moment, while trying to write this sentence, were to attend to, say, my paper, or my pen, or my ink, or even the feel of my clothes or my boots, or the unsteadiness of the table, or the temperature of the room, or the presence of its other occupants, why, I should never get the sentence written — and the writing of it is child's play compared with keeping one's eye on the ball. Luckily, I could rewrite the sentence if I made a mess of it. But alas! the golfer can never rehit his ball. And he, poor soul, the while he is addressing himself to that exacting task, is beset

with as many sensations as am I; and if he "attends" to any one of them — his stance, his grip, the position of his club, the lie of the ball, the character of the ground, the direction of the wind (all of which ought to have been, each in its turn, carefully attended to before); to say nothing of his exceeding great desire to hit properly (in itself the chief impediment to hitting properly); his equally exceeding great desire to see whither his ball is going; to say nothing also of his subliminal consciousness that he is being watched by at least three pairs of eyes — sometimes by threescore; if, I say, he attends to any one of these or of the thousand and one other things that, as a matter of fact, are making their impressions upon his nerves and brain, that golfer is *not* "keeping his eye on the ball." So it comes to this, that to play golf well, to play golf at all, one must school oneself to be absolutely blind and deaf to unnumbered sensations and impressions, and to concentrate one's whole undivided attention on that meek little object at one's feet.

## XXV

There is yet another difficulty to be overcome if we would keep our eye upon the ball, one which

hitherto seems to have escaped both observation and analysis; it is this: Everybody knows that when he concentrates his attention very fixedly on something, not only does his mind seem to be in a state of tension, but his muscles too: one clenches one's fist or wrinkles one's brow or sets one's teeth. These are called "overflow phænomena," and they seem to help us in concentrating our attention. Very probably the attention would not be so fixed if there were no overflow phænomena. Well, when we strike a ball in golf, very few overflow phænomena are permissible or possible. One may wrinkle one's brow (how many photographs of players in the act of striking show a wrinkled brow!); but if one tautens any of the muscles necessary for the stroke, the stroke is spoiled. Novice after novice I have seen spoil stroke after stroke by holding legs and arms rigid in an effort to concentrate attention. It must not be done; and yet the attention must be just as extreme as if all sorts of muscular overflow phænomena were possible. We must deliberately inhibit these phænomena, yet we must not by one iota relax the attention. — It is no slight obstacle to keeping one's eye on the ball, is this.

Nor does even this exhaust the list of obstacles to be overcome. We must remember that to keep one's eye on the ball requires an act of attention. Now the act of attention is performed by a cell or cells in the brain, situated, I believe, somewhere in the frontal lobes. Of course these cells, like muscles, easily tire. Well, if the novice or the duffer knew that psychological experimenters had come to the conclusion that "the duration of a single act of attention is from three to twenty-four seconds; most usually five to eight seconds," [1] he would be extremely careful not to tire out those cells in his frontal lobes by prolonged and futile fidgeting before he strikes.

Yet another difficulty: Almost all the other sensations and impressions are stronger and more clamorous than is this of the retinal image of the ball. This piece of painted India rubber is the most insignificant thing in the landscape. By its very inconspicuousness and diminutiveness it seems to be saying, "Do not mind me." But if you do not "mind" it; if you mind what your caddie will say or your opponent will think if you miss it; or what your score will be if you

[1] W. B. Pillsbury, *Attention*, page 83.

hit it; or what your own self will ejaculate if you top it or sclaff it — why, in all probability you will top it or sclaff it.

Which little fact leads to another curious little fact. Often I have heard a man say, "There! I was afraid I should do that." Precisely. He was not "perceiving" his ball; his mind was in reality wandering; and, such are the intricacies and profundities of the human mind — so little do we seem to be masters of our own minds — that this, that, or the other little, vague, inchoate notion or suggestion, of the very existence of which the mind is not aware, rises to the surface, proclaims itself supreme, and dominates and tyrannizes over the entire man. Truly, we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and the physiological and psychological structure of the so-called rational human being is past finding out. The whole thing seems so childishly simple; yet the achievement of that whole thing is so abominably difficult. No wonder we make mistakes in golf. We make mistakes in every department of life: we bet on the wrong horse, or the wrong cards; we buy the wrong stock; we back the wrong friend; we marry the wrong wife. Is it any wonder we make the wrong

stroke? And golf is more exacting than racing, cards, speculation, or matrimony. Golf gives no margin: either you win or you fail. You cannot hedge; you cannot bluff; you cannot give a stop-order; you cannot jilt. One chance is given you, and you hit or miss. There is nothing more rigid in life. And it is just this ultra and extreme rigidity that makes golf so intensely interesting.

But "interesting" is hardly the word by which to describe the lure of golf. The human masculine mind loves to assert itself, to show itself supreme, to prove to itself — and to others — its mastery over circumstance, its domination over the things or persons by which or by whom it is opposed. Well, here on the links it is opposed by a quiet little ball lying within a known distance of a quiet little hole, and the thing to be done is to put one into the other. You have not to pore over turf news, or remember long or short suits, or scan the city article, or make yourself agreeable at afternoon teas. You have to hit. But ah! that hit! that one precise and particular hit! How it taxes the human soul!

## XXVI

What a piece of work is man! And how golf intensifies our amazement at that piece of work! Extraordinary, indeed, it is to think that a moral attribute, a mental habit, an intellectual trait, an inherited temperament, will determine the nature of the game you play. In a sense, of course, a man's character will always determine the manner in which he will play any game; or, to put it conversely, the way a man plays any game will always be an index to his character. But, with the possible exception of poker (which is sedentary and may therefore be excluded), is there any game so completely indicative of character as golf? — I shall not easily forget the smile that flitted across the face of a taciturn old golfer, when, in the smoking-room one evening, a comparative youth, who had just commenced the game, talking, with that nonchalance customary to ignorance and youth, of his aptitude or inaptitude for golf, somewhat airily remarked that at all events he was not a bad hand at tennis, and therefore supposed that in time he might reasonably hope . . . etc., etc. Yes; I understand that smile now; and very kind it was of

that ancient golfer merely to smile. Tennis, I gladly admit, is one of the finest of games; but it is not the revealer, nor is it the developer, of character that is golf.

Almost unconsciously in golf one finds oneself ranking men, estimating them, summing them up, by the way they play; and many a man, I venture to say, has found companionship come to him or go from him according to the estimate formed of him on his links. One man, to my actual knowledge, got himself dearly beloved by numberless men, men who only knew him as they met him on the links. — Where his house was I don't even know. The just and generous way he played; his kindliness to younger players; his manliness, straightforwardness, and courage; the way he got out of difficulties; his quietness and meekness; his unselfishness; his carefulness; his consideration . . . instinctively one felt that if one did meet him in business or in official or in social life one would have trusted him. — His portrait hangs in my locker. — Be these my thanks to thee, departed mentor, for lessons more valuable than many received from pulpit or dais or platform.

## XXVII

Am I ranking golf too high? Not a whit. All men know that sport is an index to character. (Who was it said that Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton?) I do not mean to contend that the roué will play badly and the saint well. By no means. Scratch men are not always sheep, nor are duffers necessarily goats. But I am rather inclined to contend that good clean regular living, and good healthy sane thinking, will conduce to good golfing, and that the opposites of these will conduce to the reverse. I do not regard the official Handicap as exactly a moral classification; but I do know that men who excel in the game are not looked-up to for their prestidigitation alone. Not every good man will be a good golfer; but I challenge any one to dispute the fact that every really good golfer will at heart be a good man.

I think Mr. Bernard Bosanquet would bear me out in this. He has a very suggestive and a very corroborative sentence on the seventy-seventh page of his "Psychology of the Moral Sense," [1] "In cases of deliberate action at a

[1] London: The Macmillan Co. 1904.

high level of consciousness," he says, — that is, when a highly-developed animal, such as man, tries to do a definite thing, "the self or personality participates; *i.e.*, one of the ideas which are striving for predominance reinforces itself by the whole mass of our positive personality." So that if that personality is weak or vacillating, is mistrustful or despondent, is distracted by qualms of conscience and unable to master itself, the idea which ought to predominate will not predominate, for it will not be properly reinforced. Golf, in short, is not so much a game as it is a creed and a religion. Only the man who has not learned how thoroughly under control he must keep his mind, his body, and his morals, will dispute that assertion.

I have said that art and sport are near akin. Are not art and sport and religion very nearly akin? — Upon which little text perhaps another monograph might be writ. At all events it certainly is neither irreverent nor irrational to find a kinship between sport and art and religion. If man has evolved, all man's faculties have evolved also. As George J. Romanes long ago showed, what was mere "excitability" to external stimuli in the Protozoa has developed

into the rudiments of ethics in the higher Vertebrates,[1] and (we may add) into religious aspiration in Man. For, "from the needs of animal life," says Mr. Alexander Sutherland, in a book which ought to be much better known than it is, "there sprang . . . that moral instinct which, with its concomitant intelligence, forms the noblest feature as yet visible on this ancient earth of ours." [2]

Return we to our links.

## XXVIII

The difficulties of golf are immense. For think for a moment: there is scarcely a muscle in the body that is not called into play; and every muscle is controlled by a nerve. In fact, every muscle is a bundle of fibres or spindles, and every fibre or spindle is controlled by a branch of a nerve, cannot contract save in response to a stimulus conveyed to it by a branch of a nerve. Unless an order is sent from the

[1] *Mental Evolution in Man: Origin of Human Faculty.* London: Kegan Paul. 1888.

[2] *The Origin and Growth of the Moral Instinct.* By Alexander Sutherland, M.A. In two volumes. Vol. I, p. 1. London: Longmans. 1898.

brain and distributed to each and every part of the machinery which moves the trunk and limbs, not a movement can be made. And to ensure harmonious and co-ordinate movement, those orders must be very carefully, not only timed, but apportioned. Indeed, it would seem that duplicate orders, that two sets of stimuli, have to be despatched. There is, first, that which governs the "muscular sense," or, as some physiologists prefer to call it, the kinæsthesis, the sense that determines how tightly to hold the club and that poises the body for the swing. It is the sense, speaking generally, which ensures the proper relative rigidity or flexibility of opposing flexor and extensor muscles. It is chiefly concerned in judging distance, and is especially noticeable in the short Approach. In the second place, there is the hit or swing. This is the office of the motor centres, and is brought about by a strong contraction of muscles, a contraction that should be rapidly yet perfectly evenly increased. Both sets of stimuli must be intimately and intricately combined throughout the whole course of the swing: the wrists must ease off at the top and tauten at the end; the left knee

must be loose at the beginning and firm at the finish; and the change from one to the other must be as deftly and gently, yet swiftly, wrought, as a crescendo passage from pianissimo to fortissimo on a fiddle.

## XXIX

Is it possible, from this physiological point of view, to determine what is the fundamental difference between a good player and a bad? Can we say what it is makes a great golfer? At first sight one is inclined to answer, As well try to find out what makes a great general, a great poet, a great artist. Genius plays as large a part on the links as it does in life; and "genius," the dictionary says, "implies the possession of high and peculiar natural gifts which enable their possessor to reach his ends by a sort of intuitive power." However, leaving the genius out of view as beyond the reach of ordinary explanation, what is it that enables one man always to go round under eighty and another never? Well, for one thing, I suspect Imitation plays a large part in golf — as indeed it does in all life.

Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace and Professor Poulton have pointed out its importance among the lower animals, and Professor Yrjö Hirn its importance in art. Mimicry it is probably — whatever in its ultimate analysis mimicry may be — which is at the bottom of all education; that by which we learn grammar no less than golf.

## XXX

Mimicry seems to be a sort of acquired and evolutionary memory: an instinctive inclination to do those things which our ancestors did. And they did them, I suppose, because it was beneficial and preservative of life so to do. By the constant repetition of such acts and motions as tended to preserve or to propagate life, our progenitors developed and handed on to their progeny certain nerve-cells, and when these nerve-cells are innervated by the proper stimuli, they act as they did in our forefathers; and so deep-seated and ingrained in our muscular and neural apparatus is this acquired propensity to respond to stimuli, that it becomes in time automatic and unconscious, *and* is called "mimicry." Whence does the

young cuckoo learn to lay its eggs in other birds' nests? Its parents did not teach it, because no young cuckoo ever saw its parents — and its foster-parents lay their eggs in their own nests! We can only fall back upon an acquired and evolutionary memory which causes it to "mimic" those parents whom it never saw. Well, the youthful caddie probably picks up golf by sheer unconscious imitation, and, his motor centres being highly docile, the correct golfing swing comes to him with ease — as a child learns to talk simply by hearing its parents, because all the nerve-centres necessary for speech already lie acquired and embedded in the third left frontal convolution of his brain. The man who takes up golf at thirty or forty, when the motor centres are by no means docile, and the nerve-currents have been for years accustomed to flow in very different channels, — cricket channels and tennis channels, — the elderly beginner has to learn golf as a man learns a new language, by accidence and prosody. If he can imitate his professional, well and good, but he will in all probability have also to apply himself assiduously to the grammar of the

game. But to imitate requires the innervation of nerve-centres in the brain — all unconscious, or rather all subconscious, as no doubt that innervation is.

## XXXI

To begin at the bottom, then, if the physiologists are not all wrong, to excel in golf requires first of all a good brain. There is a part of the brain called the corpora striata. "The corpora striata," say the neurologists, "are great motor ganglia in some way concerned with the execution of voluntary, emotional, and ideo-motor movements." [1] "The Corpus Striatum," says Broadbent, ". . . translates volitions into actions, or puts in execution the commands of the intellect; that is, it selects, so to speak, the motor nerve nuclei in the medulla and cord appropriate for the performance of the desired action, and sends down the impulses which set them in motion." [2]

Nor is that all. In co-operation with the

[1] *The Brain as an Organ of Mind.* By H. Charlton Bastian. Page 564. London: Kegan Paul. 1880.

[2] *British Medical Journal,* April 1, 1876. Quoted by Bastian, *op. cit.,* p. 567.

corpora striata is the cerebellum, which "co-ordinates movements . . . or combines the general movements . . . ordered by volition."[1] —That is to say, if you want to move your arms and legs all together *so*, you must call upon the striate bodies and the little brain to convey the orders; and if the *so* is a highly complicated and delicate series of movements, they must be good striate bodies and a good little brain to be equal to it; and to these undoubtedly we must add a good spinal cord to boot.

Secondly, given a first-class corpus striatum, and a cerebellum equally good, these two parts of the brain, together with the cord and all the nerve-cells and fibres by which they operate, must be educated, by constant practice, to perform smoothly, quickly, and forcibly the complex motions necessary for the peculiar stroke of golf. This, I take it, is done by what Professor Loeb calls the "associative memory." The associative memory is a very important affair indeed. Loeb goes so far as to make it synonymous with the will, with self-consciousness, with the Ego! Yet its office and

[1] *British Medical Journal*, April 1, 1876. Quoted by Bastian, *op. cit.*, p. 567.

function are simple, namely, to ensure the almost automatic sequence of such movements as have previously been deliberately and hesitatingly combined. The golf stroke is a highly complex one, and one necessitating the innervation of innumerable cerebro-spinal centres. Not only hand and eye, but arms, wrists, shoulders, back, loins, and legs must be stimulated to action. No wonder that the associative memory has to be most carefully cultivated in golf. To be able, without thinking about it, to take your stance, do your waggle, swing back, pause, come forward, hit hard, and follow through well over the left shoulder, always self-confidently — ah! this requires a first-class brain, a first-class spinal cord, and first-class muscles.

## XXXII

What the anatomists say is this, that, if the proper orders are issued from the cortex, and gathered up and distributed by the corpora striata and the cerebellum, are then transferred through the crus cerebri, the pons varolii, and the anterior pyramid of the medulla

oblongata, down the lateral columns of the spinal cord into the anterior cornua of grey matter in the cervical, the dorsal, and the lumbar region, they will then "traverse the motor nerves at the rate of about a hundred and eleven feet a second and speedily excite definite groups of muscles in definite ways, with the effect of producing the desired movements." [1]

"Definite ways" and "desired movements" "speedily excited"! Heaven forefend us! Are not these THE *desiderata* of the golfer?

But Bastian and Broadbent, I shall be told, are a bit out of date; though Dr. Bastian is still writing, and writing with all the fervour of youth. Let me then quote Sherrington, a pre-eminent neurologist of the day. — Sherrington has tried to find out what it is that determines the final and definite movement of a set of muscles when more than one stimulus exists. His experiments were made on a dog. Would they had been made on a golfer, for if any one thing is patent to the indifferent golfer it is that he has to attend to a terrible lot of stimuli; and to which particular stimulus his muscles will respond he would give a great

[1] *Op. cit.*

deal to know. (What duffer can tell beforehand whether he is going to slice or pull, to baff or to top?) Sherrington argues thus: "The motor paths at any moment accord in a united pattern for harmonious synergy, co-operating for one effect. . . . The struggle between dissimilar arcs for mastery over their final common path takes place in the synaptic field at origin of the final neurones. . . . The issue of that conflict — namely, the determination of which competing arc shall for the time being reign over the final common path — is largely conditioned by three factors. One of these is the relative intensity of the stimulation. . . . A second main determinant . . . is the functional species of those reflexes. . . . A third main factor deciding the conflict between the competing reflexes is 'fatigue.' . . . The animal mechanism is thus given solidarity by this principle which for each effector organ allows and regulates interchange of the arcs playing upon it, a principle which I would briefly term that of 'the interaction of reflexes about their common path.'" [1] That is to say,

[1] *Address to the Physiological Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.* 1904.

muscles are moved by orders issued by the neurone or nerve-centre governing those muscles; when this neurone receives conflicting orders from headquarters, it transmits only one, and this one is determined by (*a*) its strength; (*b*) its character; or (*c*) its freshness. Accordingly, the task for the golfer is by no means an easy one, for he has to move several sets of muscles, and he has to see to it that the orders issued to their respective neurones are strong, are of a particular character, and are fresh. If he does not know what sort of an order to issue; if, for instance, he forgets for the fractional part of a second, any one of the numerous injunctions imperative for a proper stroke — the firm grip, the eye on the ball, the head steady, the right foot fixed, the rhythmic backswing, the twirl of the wrists, the accelerated velocity, the hit at the impact, the glorious follow-through, to say nothing of the preliminary stance, waggle, judging of distance, and correct angle of feet, elbows, body, and what-not — well, all I can say is that woe betides him. "The multiplicity of the conflict," says Sherrington, "seems extreme." We can positively assure him that it is.

## XXXIII

But it is highly probable that the stroke in golf is more complex even than this. Psychologists are, I believe, agreed that there is in the mind a faculty called the Imagination. Indeed, there has been a whole essay written and printed on "The Creative Imagination."[1] The office of the Imagination is to present to the mind, or rather to re-present to the mind, images not actually and objectively then and there existing. It cannot present to the mind things that never were on sea or land; but it can combine images in a novel way: it can piece together all sorts of portions of past experiences. It can never quite get out of the world of experience; but out of the world of experience it can form absolutely new pictures — as dreams so often prove to us. The Imagination is perhaps one form of Professor Loeb's Associative Memory. Whatever it is, it plays a most important part in life. Upon it the artist, whether he be poet, painter, musician, architect, sculptor, or writer, relies. Upon it, as a matter of fact, everybody relies more or

[1] By Théodule Ribot.

less all through life; for all through life we are forming to ourselves images of things — of things as they might be, or ought to be, or as we should like them to be, and even images of ourselves as we might be or ought to be or as we should like ourselves to be; and we act accordingly. And assuredly the Imagination plays a most important part in golf. The golfer, I take it, has to present to himself a picture of how a particular shot should be played before he tries to play it. In this probably lies the importance of the address and the waggle, during which, all unconsciously to its owner, the mind of the player is presenting a picture of the stroke as it should be made. — The late F. G. Tait not only imagined to himself each stroke before he made it; he used always to make this preliminary and imagined stroke. In all likelihood the muscles rarely go through any deliberate series of movements unless the Imagination has previously given the mind a picture of that series of movements, and has, as it were, taught it to the muscles — perhaps the orders are not despatched to all the necessary motor-centres concerned till the Creative Imagination has determined what is to be

done and how it shall be done. In the Professional and in the Caddie the pictures have so often been performed, the Associative Memory or the Creative Imagination has been so perfectly trained, that they are never cognizant of this pre-requisite and antecedent representation: they appear to swing, and they think they swing, automatically. But the amateur and the novice — ah! these have to educate the Imagination by slow and laborious processes; these cannot hit till they have thought-out the hit — as the poet cannot indite, or the painter depict, or the musician compose, or the architect construct, or the sculptor carve, or the essayist write, till each has thought-out his theme.

It is a very subtle and a very recondite thing, is this faculty of Imagination, and the lengths to which it can go, and the themes upon which it can disport itself, are infinite and immense. It is busy in the schoolboy dawdling on his way to school; it is at work in the hoary head of the octogenarian gazing pensively into the fire; the philosopher, the artist, the poet, live in worlds created by their Imaginations; and there are those who hold that our conceptions of the Universe, that our conceptions of

the Deity, depend entirely upon this faculty divine. And they are probably not far wrong. The Senses limit us to the "here" and the "now," to the actually present; and Reason does little more than compare, distinguish between, or generalize upon, the things given us by the Senses. What is it leads us to think that there may be things above us and beyond — things infinitely removed from the "here," events infinitely anteposed and postponed from the "now"? What leads us to think that there may be, behind all appearances, a Something that appears, a Something, either immanent in, or behind and superior to, this visible and tangible world? Surely just this faculty of Imagination.

## XXXIV

We seem to have travelled far beyond the limits of the links. But have you ever noticed that far lesser things than links, if thoughtfully considered, will lead us to the contemplation of things supernal, and, it may be, divine? Give the Imagination rein, and not a thing upon this flattened globe but will lead us far beyond its habited periphery. — The rubber of your ball came probably from African

forests. Those African forests are products of sun and soil. Sun and soil have a history of myriads of ages. Whence came they? From nebulæ? Whence came the nebulæ? Out of æther? Whence came it? Did a Supreme Being say, "*Fiat* Æther"? But whence came *He?* and why did He invent sun and soil and rubber and golf? — and poor peccant golfers? He cannot want to be amused; and if He is omniscient and supreme, nothing He could invent could add to His knowledge or amusement. — Quæry: Are ether, and sun, and soil, and rubber, and golfers, *He?* Is He immanent in us all? Yet, if immanent, whence came the peccancy? — Great is the mystery, not only of Godliness,[1] but of Golf.

But all this is but one more proof that Sport and Art and Religion, looked at nearly and analysed to the core, are very near akin. Let us get back to our anatomists and neurologists.

## XXXV

I am afraid that unless these anatomists and neurologists can tell us some remedy for

[1] I Tim. iii, 16.

improperly issued and incorrectly communicated orders, I am afraid their lucubrations will be of no very great practical value to the golfer who is off his game. It would be a comfort to find out what portion of the anatomical apparatus really was at fault. It would be a comfort to be able to fix the blame, say, on the infundibulum of the pituitary body or on the valve of Vieussens. Which the offending centre is, I am afraid we shall not know till some foozling golfer submits to trepanning. — Perhaps not even then; for if, as I believe is the case, no alienist has yet been able to discover a cerebral lesion in the lunatic, it is not likely that the surgeon will find one in the foozler.

And yet it is always some unknown but sinning centre that the erring golfer blames. The bad workman used to complain of his tools; but, with numberless tools to choose from, and with absolute power of choice, the bad golfer is perforce driven to complain of some part of himself. — Never himself apparently. — The Old Adam dies hard. It is always one's digestion, or one's liver, or one's supra-renal capsules that are at fault. — Which is a curious ethico-psychological fact. — At all

events, it is a tremendous compliment to the fascination of golf that it is to these technical investigations of the anatomist that we are driven in order to explain or to excuse the vagaries of our game. One does not get "off" one's football in this way, or one's chess or one's poker or one's bridge; and if one did, one would hardly go to neurology or to histological pathology for the cause.

## XXXVI

And yet what, after all, do these innumerable excuses that the poor golfer invents for himself after a bad round mean? Whom or what is he blaming? Is he not made up of cerebral and cerebellar centres; of cranial and spinal nerves; of extensor and flexor muscles; of neurones and synaptic fields? Are they not *he?* Which is the blamer and which is the blamed? Is there some inscrutable and immaterial psychic centre, inerrant and supreme, that sits enthroned aloft and sways and rules these lesser centres? Shall we find in golf proof of the existence of a Soul?

Of a soul! If the physical mysteries of golf are so recondite, what of the psychic? These,

I fear, be beyond us. How analyze the complexities of the human golfing soul? How tread the labyrinthine mazes of temperament and of character? How unravel the mesh-work of feelings and emotions, hopes and desires and fears, exultations and disappointments, heated angers, heavy despondencies; the wrath so hard to allay or ere the sun goes down; the vain imaginings, the ridiculous puffings-up of our little souls, of our silly little souls, over a hole halved in three or a circumvented stymie? Or how explain the disturbances these bring about in the higher layers, and the resulting delinquencies of the motor muscles? — In golf we see in its profoundest aspect that profound problem of the relation of mind to matter. Nowhere in the sum-total of the activities of life is this puzzle presented to us in acuter shape than on the links. Is there an ideal and immaterial Self in the golfer which knows precisely what it wants to do; and a bodily and fleshly one that will not or cannot carry out its behests? Is there an immaterial mind, superior to, but linked with, a material brain; or does the brain, in its subtlest interstices, shade off into an immaterial mind? Does matter *think*?

Are beef and mutton and cabbage and pudding transmuted into mind?

## XXXVII

We misuse words. We construct an artificial and needless barrier between mind and matter. By "matter" we simply mean something perceptible by our five senses; and by "mind" we simply mean something imperceptible by these senses. What "matter" really is we know as little as we do what "mind" really is. Suppose we had fifty senses; suppose we could actually perceive electricity, magnetism, etherial vibrations, molecular motion, radial emanations, the interplay of emotion, the working of memory, the miracle of thought; suppose we could detect every and all of the myriad manifestations of energy as exhibited in the whole of this wonderful world! Would not the barrier be very hastily thrown down, and matter reveal itself as in reality one and the same with mind?

How extraordinarily limited is our conception of matter — so we call it! We say it has weight, colour, shape, sound, smell, texture,

temperature, or taste — just seven or eight properties, just seven or eight (for "energy" is but a name for the unknown)! And every one of these is highly problematical, and even vanishes altogether under certain conditions: there is no weight at the centre of the earth; form and colour disappear in the dark; and all the rest go with paralysis or paresis. What if matter had six or seven hundred properties? What if mind had an infinite number of senses — or rather, what if mind required no senses for the perception of matter? Would not percipient mind and perceptible matter virtually coalesce, prove themselves identical; would not subject and object be one, and perhaps the soul of man find itself coincident and conterminous with the Soul of the universe?

## XXXVIII

Speculations such as these carry us far. I seem to see in the conscientious golfer, doing his utmost, poor soul, to make matter (or mind) transcend its own powers, a type and symbol of mankind; of mankind warring with its environment, striving to overcome its limi-

tations, reaching up to some unknown ideal, pressing towards some inscrutable goal. What potentialities may not lurk in Man! Man, the thorough-going evolutionists tell us, has evolved from a microscopic and unicellular mass of protoplasm called amœba — farther back than amœba, apparently, the evolutionists cannot just now distinctly and categorically write out the pedigree of man. Well, if amœba has developed into man, into what may not man develope! What are a thousand years, or a thousand million years, to man! "Man has for ever." — How the superman will smile at the way we, his ancestors, now boggle over a three-hundred-yard hole, or a forty-foot putt! What a wonderful game of golf that superman will play! Some day we shall get some archangelical record rounds. — I wonder what par golf on the New Jerusalem links will be! — But these be transcendental themes.

## XXXIX

One more speculative point, and we will drop metaphysics. — The golfer, strive as he may, is the slave of himself. Perhaps nothing

is borne in upon the golfer more strongly after months of practice than that his place on the Club Handicap is determined by this his slavery to himself. There is not a golfer living but would say, "If I could, I would." It is not a matter of want of strength or want of skill, for every now and again one proves to oneself by a superlative stroke that the strength and the skill are there if only the mind could be prevailed upon to use them. What ails the mind that it cannot use them? Is it possible that among the many profound things that golf teaches us it teaches us that the mind is not a free agent? Is it proof of the doctrine known as Necessarianism or Determinism, the doctrine that man is the creature of his heredity and environment, and incapable of doing this rather than that? It looks very much like it. Evidently something or other determines the mind; else why, when one, in the common phrase, "makes up one's mind" to do this, that, or the other simple thing, does one not do it? Why, for example, does the mind allow the optic nerve to work more quickly than the arms and the body, as James Braid thinks? I am afraid we must conclude that body and

mind act only as they have been taught to act; taught, not only by each and all of the myriad influences and exercises brought to bear upon them, and undertaken by them, since birth, including all our own efforts and delinquencies, but also and especially by all the myriads upon myriads of influences and exercises experienced and performed by each and every of the long line of progenitors of the said mind and body. If this is true, the modern criminologist will find in golf a vindication of his theory that crime is not so much a fault as a disease, that the criminal is an hereditary degenerate, not a wilful enemy of society. And there is much to be said for this. I really begin to think a foozle is not so much a fault as a disease. Every effect has a cause, not only in the physiological sphere, but in the psychological. If, as the biologists aver, *omnis cellula e cellula*, this must be true of the cells of the spinal cord, of the striate bodies, of the medulla, of the brain — which latter we (perhaps erroneously) regard as the seat of the mind. If so, if every cell, even the cells of the brain, is the offspring of other cells and inherits their characteristics; d if thought and volition are impossible

without brain-cells; why, it follows that every emotion, every thought, every act of volition inherits characteristics and is a link in an irrefragable and interminable chain, and we cannot feel or think or choose or act or hit otherwise than as our ancestry and our education compel us to feel and think and will and do. — It is curious to notice how almost every golfer instinctively, though perhaps only subconsciously, becomes a Necessarian or Determinist. He knows perfectly well that his mind plays as large a part, or a larger, than his body in every game, yet when he wills to excel but fails to excel, he sedulously sets to work to find the causes for that failure. — I remember one golfer one afternoon plaintively attributing his failure to the fact that for luncheon he had eaten — if I remember rightly, it was cherry pie! — And he was one of the most thoughtful and sensible of men. He knew that cherry pie was converted into chyme, chyme into chyle, chyle into blood, blood into muscle-cells and nerve-cells and brain-cells, and that upon these cells depended, not only the force and accuracy of his strokes, but the steadiness and the indomitableness with which he played

them — and these latter, of course, are "mental" qualities pure and simple — at least, so we call them. All of which, surely, is one more proof of the transcendental though incomprehensible identity of "mind" and "matter." "Matter" probably *is* "mind," and that eater of cherry pie reasoned better than he knew.

## XL

I have hinted that we may be wrong in regarding the brain as the sole seat of the mind. Of the higher centres of thought, of the reasoning powers, of what goes by the name of "ratiocination," the brain may be the seat; but surely the word "mind" connotes many things besides thought. Thought deals only with the A, B, C of things. Every logical syllogism is after this fashion. If A is equal to B, and B is equal to C, then A is equal to C. Thought never gets beyond the alphabet of propositions or assertions. "Mind," as we understand it, does much more than this.—There is a pregnant sentence in Mr. Felix Clay's work on "The Origin of the Sense of Beauty" to the effect that "to a large *extent*, we may say that it is *feeling* which not

only settles about what we shall think, but to a large degree determines the conclusion to which we shall come."[1] Such an assertion would, one would think, make the logicians gape. Yet hear John Stuart Mill, the most logical of men, author of a huge book on Logic: "Men's opinions, accordingly, on what is laudable or blameable, are affected by all the multifarious causes which influence their wishes in regard to the conduct of others, and which are as numerous as those which determine their wishes on any other subject. Sometimes their reason — at other times their prejudices or superstitions; often their social affections, not seldom their antisocial ones, their envy or jealousy, their arrogance or contemptuousness; but most commonly their desires or fears for themselves — their legitimate or illegitimate self-interest."[2]

A notable passage, this, by a notable thinker. Mill also evidently saw that what we call "the mind" is by no means an instrument of pure and unadulterated thought. Hear, too, that great

[1] *The Origin of the Sense of Beauty.* P. 269. Italics mine.

[2] *On Liberty.* By John Stuart Mill. P. 4. London: Longmans. 1892 (People's Edition).

psychologist Harald Höffding: "Thought is always accompanied by a certain mood. . . . An activity of thought entirely free from feeling (as so often postulated by speculative philosophy) does not exist. It is because of the movements of feeling accompanying all ideas and thoughts, that knowledge becomes a power in the mind," [1] — and, we may add, a nuisance on the links. Which of us ever acts on "pure reason"? Who dares say at any moment that his opinion is absolutely unbiased? Who knows his own "mind"? And why does that "mind" sometimes take such a long time to "make up"? Who ever got at the innermost naked core and kernel of himself? — Well, I am inclined to think that the golfer gets nearer to it than anybody else. — Many are the frequenters of the links who have learned more about themselves on those links than they have in any other vocation in life. For golf is an interminable effort to strip off the wrappages of emotion and feeling which cover up and hide that innermost core and kernel which we are pleased to consider constitutes our real "self." Every golfer will agree

[1] *Outlines of Psychology.* Translated by Mary E. Lowndes. P. 95.

with Mill, for every golfer — at least every indifferent golfer — knows that by far the larger part of his task is the suppression of feeling. If he never suffered from anxiety or trepidation, from mistrust or conceit; if nothing elated him, nothing cast him down, nothing distracted him; then nothing would interfere with the quiet working of his mind; and as his mind knows to a nicety how every stroke should be played, he would always play superlatively well. But in all probability the mind never works uninfluenced or unimpeded by distractions such as these, distractions caused by emotions and feelings which have their seat in all sorts of places in the body — in the great sympathetic nervous system, in the ganglia and plexûs, in the nerves of the thoracic and abdominal organs, perhaps wherever there is any, what is called "vesicular neurine," throughout the body. So that "mentality" (so they call it) surely is something much more elaborate than mere brain-work, than mere excitation of the cortical layers of the cerebrum. The Mind *is* the Body — or the Body *is* the Mind, which you like. This does not mean that the Mind is material. Rather it means that the Body is immaterial.

In short, it means that we don't know what the words "material" and "immaterial" mean. And the most recent investigations of science have led to the same conclusion as that eating of cherry pie led that golfer. Cherry pie is made up of molecules; molecules are made up of atoms; atoms are made up of ions or electrons; and atoms or electrons — so, I believe, Monsieur Poincaré has mathematico-physically demonstrated — have no "mass," that is, no materiality! They are not "matter," though all "matter" is made up of them! — Where are we now? I really do not know. The visible and tangible universe seems to have been knocked into a cocked-hat. "Matter" is not "matter," and the ion is not a "thing." What on earth, then, is it? Can we even call it an "it"? They say it is in violent motion; yet I cannot imagine a thing, that is not a thing, being in motion; and to call it "energy" or a "force" is tantamount to calling it an enigma or a figment. Probably the physicist can never explain the sum-total of the universe. Perhaps the real universe is a universe of Consciousness, and we, in it, little centres of consciousness. At all events, from the physicist's standpoint, only this

I see: The erring human golfer's little bodily and mental apparatus is made up of just a temporary aggregation of cosmic stuff, of ions or electrons, a small and limited system of vortex-rings, in, and governed by, an infinite system of vortex-rings. These aggregations have been handed down to him by unnumbered ancestors; they have been influenced by his environment; he can educate them by practice and by lessons from professionals. But away from heredity and environment and education this golfer cannot get. The character of his play, the sort of game he puts up, his position on his Club Handicap as typewritten and pinned up in his smoking-room is as rigidly the result of cause and effect as is the trajectory of his ball. Cause and effect rule the psychical world equally with the physical (which at bottom are one and the same); and thought, and emotion, and volition are links in interminable and irrefragable ionical or electronical or vortical or etherial cosmic chains.

## XLI

The network of chains in the golfer's brain must be multitudinous. Golf seems to afford a cor-

roboration of the theory that there are in man several layers of consciousness. Indeed, the late Mr. F. W. H. Myers might have found in golf a pertinent proof of the existence of his "subliminal self," to the functions of which he attributed so important a share. Why a man should, say in June, play a superlatively excellent game, and in July play an execrable one, in spite of the fact that he is in July just as fit as he was in June, that passes the wit of that man — poor wight! He broods over it; he almost weeps over it; he tries remedy after remedy, but in vain — beef and beer, total abstinence; a more elaborate waggle, no waggle; right foot foward, left foot firmer; a cigar before a game, no tobacco at all — all to no purpose. He knows to a nicety how every stroke should be played; but he is blessed, so he says, if he can play it. — Can it be that the so-called human "individual" is after all a duple, triple, quadruple, quintuple, or multiple personality? Almost it would seem so. You take your stance at the first tee, and Personality No. I severely makes up his mind to play carefully and well. At the approach, Personality No. II presses. At the putt, Personality No. III is over-anxious,

and is short. At the second tee, Personality No. IV flings care to the four winds of heaven. No. V takes his eye off the ball. No. VI goes into a bunker. No. *n* anathematizes (let us hope subliminally). By this time the exasperated golfer compares himself to the Gadarene demoniac.

Indeed, a veritable demon seems to enter into a man on the links. Otherwise what on earth possesses him that he should transgress the most elementary and the most easily obeyed of rules? Why should he take his eye off his ball? Why should he "press" or hurry his stroke? There lies his ball awaiting his pleasure, and would await it for a quarter of an hour for that matter — there is not even a time-limit for the address; and every spectator, by the stern etiquette of the game, is in duty bound to stand mute and patient the while he prepares to strike. What on earth possesses him that he should look up before he strikes, or strike in a hurry? And yet man after man spoils stroke upon stroke by these infantine follies. There is no physical or artificial impediment whatsoever. Some hundred yards of level turf lie between ball and hole. A club

precisely made to suit that particular shot is handed you. Time and time again you have been taught exactly how to stand, exactly how to swing. And yet how often it has taken three, four, and even five strokes to cover those hundred yards! It would be laughable were it not so humiliating. In fact, the impudent spectator does laugh — until he tries it himself; then, — ah! then, he too gets a glimpse into that mystery of mysteries, the human mind, which at one and the same time wills to do a thing and fails to do it; which knows precisely and could repeat by rote the exact means by which it is to be accomplished, yet is impotent to put them in force. And the means are so simple, so insanely simple. We need not be surprised that the impudent spectator does not even affect to conceal his laughter in his sleeve. — But neither need we be surprised that the experts, the adepts, those who have gone through the humiliation of failure, watching these puerilities from the verandah, are moved rather to wonder than to laughter. They have had more glimpses into the profundities and complexities of the erring golfing mind than they care to reckon, and they know that the

secret of this extraordinary and baffling conflict of mind and matter is a problem beyond the reach of physiology and psychology combined.

## XLII

Talk as neurologists and psychologists may, what this fearfully and wonderfully made thing called "mind" is we have not the remotest conception. *Five* layers of consciousness? Why, there is a whole civic community underneath each one of us his hat or her bonnet. Trained watchmen sit at eye-gate and ear-gate and touch-gate and smell-gate and taste-gate, and report to the Mayor and Aldermen of the city of Mansoul regarding all personages who demand admission. Go on board ship, and not until the watchmen have assured themselves that the sound and vibration of the screw are harmless, will they let the city sleep, though the central council argue never so hard. Yet let the screw stop at the end of the voyage, when the watchmen have become accustomed to the noise and know that it is necessary to the ship, and immediately they rouse the whole city, shouting that something has gone wrong. And,

if the encephalon is a municipality, the bodily frame is, as it were, a whole country under its government, whence, according to reports received from the portals, orders are issued for the mobilization of forces and the undertaking of huge campaigns — one battalion of muscles holding the legs in firm position; another sending the arms flying in all directions. And — mystery of mysteries, miracle among things miraculous — not only are there guards and officials and troops, but apparently there is a Generalissimo or an Emperor, who can look on and analyze and criticise the doings and functions of this country and capital — can actually try to discover the method of its own working and put down in black and white the provisions of its own constitution. For surely, reader, this is precisely what you and I are attempting to do at this moment. The mind itself, so it seems, can turn round upon itself, and examine its own workings! What a stupendous puzzle! Ah! there must be more in the human mind than watchmen and aldermen and mayor; there must be lords spiritual as well as temporal — perhaps a shrine and altar, and, behind a veil, a Holy of Holies. In microcosmic Mind I seem to see

in miniature a tiny facsimile or homologue of macrocosmic Spirit, that Spirit which not only externalizes itself in Nature, but, as Plotinus of Lycopolis hath it, "possesses sight and knowledge of itself."[1]

## XLIII

But this, perhaps, is metaphysical rhetoric, smacking of mediæval superstition. Probably, as a mere matter of simple and indubitable fact, there is no such thing as mind, *a* mind, separate from and superior to cerebral and cerebro-spinal impressions and activities; and there is no such thing as thought, a psychical energy separate from and superior to the associations and connections between these cerebral and cerebro-spinal impressions and activities. The idea of an immaterial "mind" that "thinks" is a legacy handed down to us from Plato and Aristotle. What we are pleased to call "mind" — meaning thereby a ghostly entity that flits somewhere about in our brain — is nothing more or less than the sum total of those sensations, impressions, perceptions, cognitions, and associations, stored up in our brains and bodies;

[1] *Apud* Tenneman.

and what we are pleased to call "thought" — meaning thereby a supramaterial activity more ætherial than cerebral excitation — is nothing more or less than the recollection and comparison and differentiation of these same sensations, impressions, perceptions, cognitions, and associations. From birth to death, in all our waking hours, we are storing up impressions. "Mind" is simply that store; and "thought" is simply the interaction of the contents of that store.

## XLIV

To me, I confess, all this seems simple, rational, irrefutable. The amœba's "mind" is the sum total of the neural activities of his organism as inherited from his ancestors and as modified by his environment. Nobody thinks amœba has a spiritual entity somehow locked up in its protoplasm. Well, man is the direct lineal descendant of amœba. Wherefore, I cannot understand, and I cannot accept, the modern psychologists their theories of a "psycho-physical parallelism" [1] — a parallelism, mind you, for which,

[1] See W. B. Pillsbury's *Attention*, pp. 225 *et seq.* London: Sonnenschein. 1908.

they candidly admit, they can find no causal explanation whatsoever.

More willingly could I accept Descartes his theory that in the pineal gland of the brain there sat enthroned an immaterial and immortal soul, than that in every mother's son of us there were two sets of phænomena, one purely physical, and the other purely mental. — I am not distorting their views; I am actually adopting their language: listen to Herr Professor Doctor Bernstein: "The perception of the external world is essentially an act of the Mind, which has its seat in the cerebrum and is connected with this organ." [1]

I suppose it is a thing audacious to differ thus from eminent authorities. Yet I must, and I do. I can only surmise that the modern psychologists who hold this view are still in the gall of bitterness, still thrall to Aristotle, still bound by fetters welded by such terms as *ens*, and *anima*, and ψυχή, and ἐντελέχεια, and οὐσία, and νοῦς. When will they admit that the anatomical frame of man is wonderful enough, miraculous enough, immaterial enough (yes; I use the word ad-

[1] *The Five Senses of Man.* P. 163. [London]: Henry S. King and Co., 1876 (International Scientific Series).

visedly), without resorting to a ghostly "mind," a phantasmal process of "thought," and an incomprehensible system of "psycho-physical parallelism"?

Is there anything in man which has not evolved from amœba? If so, how, and in what stage of his upward career was it incarnated or incorporated in man? — But why pother over the puzzle? In its way, amœba is a thing as profoundly incomprehensible as man. Its possesses that incomprehensible thing called "life"; it has in germ that incomprehensible thing called "consciousness." Could we comprehend amœba — could we wholly explain the minutest unicellular mass of nucleated sarcode, we should explain . . . perhaps we should explain the Cosmos. — For myself, I admit gladly and at once that I have not the remotest conception of what "matter" is; but I deem it to be in itself a thing wonderful enough to evolve, and to reveal itself as, those wonderful things which we call sensation, perception, cognition, introspection, emotion, imagination, action, will. — At least, so far as this little biped called "man" is concerned, and upon this little ball called "earth." As to what matter may reveal itself as

in the sum total of All that Is — in the Cosmos, in the Absolute, in Deity, this little biped Man no more knows than does the little amphibian Frog. We cannot possibly prove that there is an outside world of which an inside world takes cognizance. Outside and inside worlds are one. Man is not an isolated entity acted upon by matter; he is an integral portion of cosmic matter — he himself surely *is* a portion of that stuff of which the cosmos is made up.

— However, it is very stupid to try to explain everything. We should smile if the beetle or the bee tried to explain everything. Well, we are not very far removed from the beetle and the bee. — How the Cosmos must smile at our theories!

— But, my dear practical golfer, I was forgetting you. I apologize. What care you for theories? Nothing. Right you are. Righter than you think for. You know perfectly well that neither your drive nor your approach nor your putt is determined by a psychic monitor flitting about your brain, nor by an unimaginable soul sitting in your glandula pinealis; they are determined by your nerves and your muscles, by what you have been, by what you have

learned, by what you have eaten and drunk. Good! Never you mind about psycho-physical parallelism. Keep muscle and nerve in good working order; be honest and clean; take lessons; learn; and be careful about what you eat and drink.

## XLV

How desperately ignorant we are of what we are! Well, few things bring home to us better the depths of this our ignorance of ourselves than our vagaries and eccentricities on the links. What particular giant-cell in the cortex of the brain fails to act when we take our eye off our ball? Will any electrode teach us that? And what cortical monitor indignantly upbraids that cell immediately afterwards? Will any theory of "multiple personality" explain for us that? Constantly one part of the mind takes another to task for dereliction of duty. Cannot the mind see to it that the municipality as a whole and the nation under its rule act in unison? Can it be that there is going on in each individual human being a gigantic constitutional struggle exactly analogous to that which is going on and has ever been going on in every nation upon this terrene

periphery — a struggle to determine who shall rule, what powers the ruler shall have, and how his actions may be checked? So it would seem.

## XLVI

Looked at nearly, golf does, indeed, raise for our consideration deep and curious questions. But golf cannot answer them, any more than can the neurologists or the psychologists — or, for the matter of that, the constitutional historians. For in golf the political constitution of this little human individual community is put to the severest and utmost test. So extremely complex, requiring the harmonious co-operation of so many sets of forces, is the task imposed by golf, that the whole body politic is thrown, every time it sets out on a round, into the throes of a constitutional crisis. A huge and difficult political problem suddenly confronts it, a problem for the correct solution of which the nation must act harmoniously and as a unit. The Republic is in danger, and the inhabitants rush about looking for one whom to appoint as Dictator. — *Or*, as the French say, well for that man among whose myriad cell-population there is always a

Cincinnatus ready to leave his plough and *attend to the game!* for unless there is, there will be consternation in the capital, and no concerted action, but only vague hurryings and recriminations, and rushings to and fro of disorderly mobs.

## XLVII

*And attend to the game.* — I do not know whether you are aware of the fact, my dear reader, but it may console you to know that if this little question of how to attend to the game has puzzled us unlearned and untechnical golfers, it has puzzled a great many very learned and very technical men also. To the problem of "attention" psychologists almost without number have of late been devoting *their* attention. Ach and Aars and Bair; Külpe and Kaes; Kohn and Kraepelin and Kelchner; and Fick and Ferrier and Féré and Fechner; Czermak and Ziehen; Dwelshauvers and Gürber and Goltz and Geissler and Geiger; Pilzecker, Pentschew, Pflaum; Henrich and Henri and Hammer; Müller and Münsterberg and Meumann; Wiersma; Kafka; Munk; Wundt; Tchisch; Stumpf; Schuppe;

Stout (you must not laugh: these are real names of real people) — all these and hosts of others have been doing their best to find out what "attention" is and what the laws by which it works; and, if all accounts are true, they differ not a little among themselves both as to one and as to other. "Recent literature," says James Mark Baldwin, "is full of theories of attention." [1]

## XLVIII

What, then, is this thing called "attention," a thing to which whole big books have been devoted? It is very difficult to find anywhere a clear, precise, adequate, and coherent definition. "Attention," says Mr. Pillsbury, "means largely that some one element of consciousness is picked out from the others, and given an advantage over them." [2] How many elements are there? Who or what picks them out? And what sort of an advantage is bestowed upon this?

Pillsbury does his best to be definite and precise. Listen: —

[1] *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology. Sub voce.*

[2] *Attention*, p. 2.

"1. The conditions of any act of attention are to be found in the present environment (objective conditions) and in the past experience of the individual (subjective conditions).

"2. The main objective conditions are the intensity, extent, and duration of the stimulus.

"3. The subjective conditions are to be found in the idea in mind at the time, in the mood of the moment, the education, previous social environment, and heredity of the individual." [1]

That is a large and a far-reaching definition indeed! But not one whit too large. Not a movement or an action of man but is guided or determined by his whole past and present. — By *his* whole past and present? Nay, by the past and present of the sum total of created things. If not a leaflet flutters or a green blade sways except in obedience to limitless cosmic law, so is it with the thoughts and emotions and actions of men.

## XLIX

Some writers have pointed out that there are two kinds of attention: (1) that which is turned to outside objects; (2) that which is

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

turned to the processes inside the mind.[1] The division is legitimate, even obvious. For example, when one is reading proof-sheets, one's attention is concentrated upon the printed words and one pays little heed to the meaning; but when one is reading an interesting novel, one pays little or no heed to spelling or punctuation, but very much heed to the story and the characters. Now, golf, it seems to me, makes demands, or tries to make demands, upon both kinds of attention at one and the same moment of time: it calls upon you to concentrate your faculties on that little external object, your ball; but it also calls upon you then and there to concentrate all your faculties upon how the stroke shall be played. It is here that the difficulty lies. Every proof-reader knows that it is next to impossible to follow the thread of the author's argument when he is attending to commas and semicolons; and no novel reader could pass an examination in the peculiarities of his author's punctuation and spelling. And yet the golfer is expected to do both!

[1] See James Sully's *Teacher's Hand-book of Psychology*, pp. 67 *et seq.*; and Th. Ribot's *The Psychology of Attention*, p. 22.

However, I doubt very much whether this thing called "attention" can be exercised upon more than one thing at a time. It is probably just because you try to make your consciousness exercise itself upon two, three, four, or five things at one and the same time that you fail to do one or other of them. Yet some golfers seem to do this; — or rather, I suspect that those golfers who never take their eye off the ball, who always stand firm, never move the head, never sway the body, always go back slowly, hit correctly, and follow through magnificently — I suspect such golfers have such an unconscious mastery over what Titchener calls the "subsidiary circumstances," that they are able to concentrate their attention on one and only one thing and leave some highly-educated, subliminal understrata of consciousness to do all the rest semi-automatically. Probably the "attention" can never be really directed to more than one thing at a time. Indeed, I go so far as to think that nine tenths of the foozles in golf are the result of a vain and futile attempt to attend to more than one thing at a time.

## L

In its true and inner essence, attention is a very mysterious thing. I suppose we might call it the concentration of the whole mind upon the particular thing that one wishes to do. But what is the "whole mind"? Who or what is it that "wishes" to do this, that, or the other; and how does this "who" or "what" differ from the "whole mind"? Is not my "whole mind" just *me?* Why cannot I do what I wish to do? How is it that I cannot compel myself to keep my head steady, to keep my eye on my ball, to follow-through? Alas! attention seems to be a most inconstant, a most insubordinate, a most incorrigible thing. Professor Titchener calls it "labile" or slippery. "I have caught myself," he says, "time and again, slipping from the prescribed object of attention to some secondary circumstance."[1] It needed no psychologist to tell any golfer that! Lastly he asks, almost in desperation, "Is attention intrinsically intermittent, and is it impossible to hold a single,

[1] *Lectures on the Elementary Psychology of Feeling and Attention*, p. 264. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1908.

simple content [he means the thing that the mind knows has to be done or attended to] steadily in the focus of consciousness?" [1] It is somewhat consoling to find that this puzzles the philosopher as much as the golfer.

All I can say is this: There seem to me to be, not exactly so many superimposed "layers" of consciousness, as so many solid spheres of consciousness, all packed into that thing we are pleased to call the "mind as a whole." Consciousness is not arranged like the poker-chips at one's elbow; it is arranged like the black and white marbles in the ballot-box of a Club (and what a lot of black balls there are!). That is to say, the concentrated consciousness of what you want to do does not only or merely rise from a lower disc to the topmost disc; it travels all over the mental ballot-box, from marble to marble; and if you take your stance "rattled," or still rattling that mental ballot-box, of course your attention will be labile and slippery. Settle down quietly, resolve what you are going to do, *steady* yourself, and perhaps all the marbles will keep quiet and contribute to the much-wished-for end.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 264.

## LI

And Mr. Bernard Bosanquet seems to bear me out in this. "The psychical elements which form the contents of the mind," he says, "are so grouped and interconnected as to constitute what are technically known as appercipient masses or systems. . . . Systems may compete with each other; they may also co-operate." [1] Any one who has seen or dissected a brain — the physical organ or instrument of these psychical elements — stands amazed at the baffling complexity of the material mechanism by which this competition or co-operation is carried out — the convolutions, the commissures, the ventricles, the fissures, the fibres — divergent, transverse, longitudinal, uncinate, and decussative, — the fasciculi, glomeruli, cinguli, fornices, fimbriæ; — any one who has studied the brain will admit that to arrive at any definite and final explanation of psychical phænomena is impossible. The brain of man is the most complicated piece of machinery that æons of evolu-

[1] *Psychology of the Moral Self*, pp. 41, 42. London: The Macmillan Co. 1904.

tion have as yet upon this planet produced. The gigantic puzzle is this: How to get this complicated piece of machinery, every cell of which, mind you, is awake, and active, and alive, and alert, all the live-long day — how to get this brain of ours, when we put on hob-nailed boots and take our stance at the tee, so to keep all its numberless centres of thought and feeling and action in so quiet and expectant a condition, as that, when all we wish to do is just to keep our eye on the ball, those centres of action will co-operate to do that simple thing. Alack! it is not a simple thing. That is the rub. To do that simple thing, thousands of brain-cells, and medulla-oblongata-cells, and spinal-cord cells, and nerve-fibre-cells, and muscle-cells, have got to receive one particular sort of order at one particular moment of time. Is there some indiscoverable, indissectable, inconceivable, and innominable centre that, like the general of an army, can issue supreme commands? I doubt it. The body of man seems more like a Republic than a Monarchy. Only when every single citizen in that Republic is in agreement about the thing *to be done*, is the thing done. One single re-

calcitrant citizen will upset the State. If the eye is not clear, or the liver is sluggish, or the stomach out of order, or the tongue furred, or the temper irritable; well, the Commonwealth is distracted; there are rebels in the camp. — Of all of which, what is the moral? A simple but momentous one surely; this, namely: For the body politic to act in unison, every citizen (that is, every anatomical cell) must be (1) in good working order, and (2) intent upon the business in hand. — Humph! No wonder golf is a difficult game!

## LII

And now, just one more theory — a very seductive one, but one incapable of proof. — What you and I and all of us want particularly to do at our every stroke in our every game is, of course, just this: to fix our attention. Well, listen to Mr. G. F. Stout: "Vasomotor adjustments regulating the flow of blood to different parts of the brain *may* be a highly-important means of fixing attention." [1] What

[1] *Analytic Psychology*, vol. I, p. 223. By G. F. Stout. London: Sonnenschein. 1896. Italics his.

Stout means is this: If any part of our bodily frame is particularly active or energetic, there is an increased blood-supply to that particular part. This increased blood-supply is conditioned by means of the vaso-motor mechanism — a minute system of nerves situated in the very coats of the arteries themselves. Now, it may be that, by a sort of auto-suggestion or self-hypnotization, we can *will* that those ideo-motor centres in the brain which govern the movements of the muscles utilized in the stroke at golf shall be abundantly supplied. Perhaps it is precisely this that one does, all unconsciously, during the address. But the theory is absolutely incapable of proof, and has, indeed, I believe, been discarded by its first propounders.[1] However, whether it is blood-supply or what it is, evidently what we call the mind can give orders to certain cerebral centres to do certain things in a certain way and at a certain time. We judge distance, take note of the wind, examine the turf, and apprise this, that, and the other group of brain-cells of what we shall presently call upon them to do — and dismiss that part of the business.

[1] *Dr. Alfred* Lehmann and Professor Michael Foster.

Then we plant our feet, grip the club, look at the ball, and, remembering all these things, give the word of command. We see an example of this in bicycling. When bicycling very fast, the eyes are constantly watching the path several yards ahead, and apparently they can advise the mind about giving orders to the motor-centres as to how obstacles shall be avoided when they are reached. It would seem that the mind can apprise beforehand the neurones or motor-centres of what they shall presently be called upon to do: they tell the motor-centres to get ready to act — though, I presume, not very long beforehand. A bicyclist could hardly prepare himself for an obstacle fifty yards ahead and be sure of avoiding it blindfold; nor in all probability could a golfer swing absolutely correctly after shutting his eyes for fifty seconds.

I wish psychologists would resort to the links for their psychological experiments, not confine themselves to their laboratories, with their perimetrical, æsthesiometrical, tachistoscopical, and whatnotical tests. If they would only play golf and examine themselves while they try to play, they would find more food for

thought, and more "copy" for psychological text-books, than at present they seem to be aware of, — and perhaps help us poor unpsychological golfers to improve our game. What would not a golfer give to know how precisely at every stroke in the game to concentrate his "attention" on that stroke! nay, to concentrate his attention on any one single ingredient, requisite, or portion of that stroke!

Making a stroke in golf is very like signing your name very fast. When you have done it a thousand times, you can write it with your eyes shut, and write it very legibly — even though it may consist of ten or fifteen letters and each letter has to be accurately formed. If there is a weak point in your signature, — if, that is, there are one or two letters illegibly traced, — all you have to do is to fix your attention, *beforehand*, on them, and the fingers automatically obey the injunctions conveyed to them by this previous attention. And you can fix the attention beforehand on any letter or letters you like. So with the stroke in golf. When you have sufficiently practised the swing — provided you have taught yourself to swing properly — your *arms* will carry the club-head through the whole

thirty or forty feet of curves smoothly, evenly, and in accurate time. If a certain portion of your swing is defective, it is upon this that you must fix the previous attention. If there are two, three, four, or five defective elements in your swing — Heaven help you! for I do not think you can fix your attention upon more than one. Probably the arms move too swiftly to allow one neurone to obey one injunction and another to obey another. When I first rode a bicycle, if four or five obstacles suddenly presented themselves, these to the right, those to the left, I found I could not transfer my attention from one to the other sufficiently quickly to give the muscles the requisite orders — and I came a cropper. So with the signature, and so with the golf-stroke. You could not possibly sign your name very fast if you fixed your attention upon tracing every letter very legibly — in fact, you cannot so fix your attention. The attention can be fixed only upon one part of your signature — or of your stroke — at a time. The signature — or the stroke — is a single, homaloidal, and unified series of muscular movements; it should be accomplished by a single act of attention, an act of attention definitely deter-

mined upon at the moment of putting pen to paper, or at the moment of raising club-head for the backward curve.

## LIII

But, since I have stated that my own belief is that only one thing can be "attended" to at a time, you will probably be inclined to ask me what is the most important thing, what precisely ought we to attend to at the moment of impact of club with ball. Well, if you ask me, I say, *the image of the ball.* I firmly believe that what is necessary is the external, not the internal, form of attention, the "sensorial," not the "ideational," as they call it. I firmly believe that if you can keep your eye on the ball — keep it there, mind you — and "attend" to that one thing alone at the moment that you hit, the hit will "coom aff," as that Scotchman told me. — Indeed, is not that Scotchman's asseveration that his mind was a blank at the moment of impact a corroboration of my theory that it is an external attention that is necessary? The fact is, all the internal attention must be done during the

address; when you *hit*, you must — keep — your — eye — upon — the — ball. That is my theory. And indeed a noted psychologist whom I have since been reading — one who actually does mention the game of golf — bears me out in this: "'Keep your eye on the ball' in golf," says Mr. Pillsbury, "is a familiar statement of the fact that the movement of the arms is controlled immediately by attention to some object in the field of vision. There is little or no thought of the movements to be made or of anything else except *the place upon which the blow is to be delivered.*" [1] All of which merely means that the attention to "the movements to be made" must be finished and done with before the attention is fixed upon "the place upon which the blow is to be delivered."

It is a treat to see a psychologist referring to golf, even though that reference is couched in the cold and calculating language of science; for as a rule the psychologists help us little. Suppose, for example, that a duffer is in a bunker (as, ahem! not seldom happens). He has numerous modes of play from which to choose: to play forward; to play back; to

[1] *Attention*, pp. 151, 152. Italics mine.

gain distance; to attain safety. What says the psychologist about actions performed under difficulties? "The solution of the difficulty, like the appreciation of the difficulty, arises under the influence of definite subjective conditions. The solution must have been experienced before in some similar situation, and ordinarily many solutions have been put in practice at different times. Which of the many different solutions shall come out depends upon the character of the momentary mood, and the education, in the broad sense, that the thinker has enjoyed up to the moment in question. One who reasons well in an emergency is one who appreciates the situation fully, who has an ample array of knowledge at hand to bear upon the situation, and whose entire knowledge is active at the particular moment in choosing from among the possible solutions that are known." [1] True, most true. If only a duffer in a bunker could take to heart these truths!

## LIV

It is a pity that so many literary elucidators and explicators of the game of golf devote so

[1] Pillsbury, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

many pages to the subsidiary circumstances. They descant, most learnedly and delightfully, I admit, on how you should stand and how you should strike, on the kind of club you should use and on the kind you should not; I wonder if they would pardon me if I said that, as a matter of simple fact, if one *attended to the game* (with all that that means), almost one could stand and strike as one chose, and almost with any kind of club. If one never, never, transgressed any of the primary rules of golf, almost one could play with a pole-axe! —

## LV

And in his most inmost heart of hearts the golfer knows this. He knows perfectly well that, if he never took his eye off the ball, if he never pressed, if he always followed through, his "personal equation" would be lowered. Each observer has his own individual mode of attending. In all important astronomical and geodetic observations, I believe, each observer has affixed against his name his particular "personal equation." Is not this corrobora-

tive of my contention that the power of concentration is a natural gift which differs with every individual? If a Golf Club were a psychological laboratory, not a congregation of men competing one with another for cups and medals and trophies, each member would have, pinned up in the dressing-room, his "personal equation." — As a matter of fact each member's handicap, as pinned up in the dressing-room, *is* his personal equation: it takes account, of course, of his strength and skill and judgement; but, all unknown to the Handicapping Committee, it takes account also of his power of attention — a more important thing, by very many odds, than his strength, his skill, or his judgement.

## LVI

What takes place, or what ought to take place, in the mind of the golfer at every stroke is, so I imagine, a seven-fold process: —

I. *Sensation* — a clear image of the ball on the retina.

II. *Perception* — the cerebral or mental reception and recognition of that image.

III. *Cognition* — a clear understanding of what you wish to do.

IV. *Imagination* — a picturing to yourself of how to do it.

V. *Attention* — the concentration of the whole mind on the ball.

VI. *Volition* — the issuance of the orders to strike, and,

VII. *Action* — the resulting movements of the arms, legs, and trunk.

The most important of these seven processes is Attention; for, unless you *attend*, (1) the image is blurred; (2) the cerebral or mental recognition dim; (3) the understanding (of distance, direction, required force of stroke, etc.) vague; (4) the imagined movements obscure; (5) the mind diverted; (6) the orders to the motor centres confused; and (7) the stroke ineffective.

## LVII

"But what will *make* me attend?" you ask. Ah! now we strike real difficulty. Difficult as the psychological analysis of the stroke has been, it is child's play compared

with the problem of how to make one's self attend. I have searched psychologist after psychologist for an answer, but in vain. They don't seem to know, though they use up oceans of ink and acres of paper in dilating upon thousands of themes. All I can say is this: the power of attention seems to be a natural gift. Some men have it; some men have not. I have heard of a man who, when absorbed in a book, can hardly be aroused from his perusal of that book: he is, in the common phrase, dead to all "subsidiary circumstances." That man's handicap in a swagger club in England is *plus* four! That is the sort of man that can play golf. Absolute absorption in the matter in which you are engaged — this it is which wins. If you cannot be utterly and actively absorbed in what you are doing, be it only looking at your ball, you had better choose for your recreation some other game than golf. Golf is not a mere matter of muscular movement — or rather, the muscular movements peculiar to golf depend altogether upon the kind of mind or temperament or character which lies behind and controls and determines those muscular movements. If you

are not master of your mind or your temperament or your character, — if you are not just master of yourself, — you certainly will not master the muscular movements peculiar to golf. One has to put a force upon oneself; one has to be determined. But even so, neither force nor determination can be summoned up at once and at will. The weak-willed cannot all at once become strong-willed. Virtue, said Aristotle, is a ἕξις, a habit: one becomes virtuous by practising virtue, as one learns to play on the kithara by playing on the kithara. *Nemo,* says an old Latin adage, *repente fuit turpissimus:* no one is a blackguard all at once. Neither is a man a saint all at once. Neither is a man a good attender all at once — nor a good looker-at-the-ball. To attend, one must practise attention. It is not a thing to be come at in a day or a week or a month. As says Stout, "The resolution to devote attention to an unattractive subject can only succeed after repeated effort." [1] Besides, some men are better attenders than are others. Some men are more moral than others. Some men have more "will-power." Attention is a virtue. As Mon-

[1] *Analytic Psychology,* Vol. I, p. 242.

sieur Théodule Ribot, one of the most delightful and lucid expositors of Attention, has told us, "Voluntary attention is . . . a discipline and a habit." [1] This virtue, like any virtue, to be acquired must be cultivated. That is all the advice I have to offer. But I have a dim sort of idea that it is a piece of advice, the which, if you or I, reader, could honestly follow, 'twould make you and me better golfers. — Go out on the links and practise just this one thing of attending to your ball — not for a day, or a week, or a month, and write and tell me the result. It is the one thing needful. It is the pearl of great price. If you cannot keep your eye upon your ball, never will you be a golfer. Make up your mind to that. — Almost I would go so far as to say that, were a man never to take his eye off his ball, whatever his style, he would not only win matches, but medals. For, as a matter of simple fact, it is highly probable that, if you can so thoroughly control yourself — your muscles, your nerves, your emotions, and your mind — as always to look steadfastly at your ball till

[1] *The Psychology of Attention.* By Th. Ribot. Authorized translation, p. 45. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company. 1890.

after you have actually hit it, — after you have hit it, mind, — it is highly probable, I say, that your self-control will enable you to time your stroke, avoid pressing, disregard the encroaching pair behind, put up with your annoying caddie, be lenient to your loquacious opponent, be patient and resourceful in bunkers, — be your true, quiet, self-confident self throughout the game.

## LVIII

"But," I can almost hear a critic saying to himself, "this theory of the importance of exercising will-power on the links clashes with your theory of Necessarianism or Determinism, which declares that man is not altogether a free agent, and which, you have told us, you think that the game of golf confirms." Well, this little book is not a metaphysical treatise, nor do I feel myself called upon to discuss that mediæval but sempiternal puzzle of the freedom of the will. But this I will say: There are just two misleading terms in that little phrase, the freedom of the will, and these are just the words "freedom" and "will." There is no such thing in the bodily frame as a separate entity or faculty called a

"will" walking about like a pilot on deck and directing the course; and, if there were, such pilot would not be "free" from the influences of wind and tide. The bodily frame is like a ship, with its captain and crew. The captain has to go by the chart (that is, by his knowledge and experience of life), and the crew have to trim the sails (that is, adapt actions to circumstances). The captain (that is, the higher co-ordinating centres) is not "free," for he is dependent on his crew (to which we may compare the nerves and the ganglia) — which, in turn, are dependent upon weather. The captain may "will" as much as he likes, but if his crew are mutinous, or the winds contrary, he will not make port. "Will-power" at bottom merely means an intelligent captain and an obedient crew; and "putting-forth" or "exercising" will-power merely means that captain and crew must work in harmony. So that, if attention, if virtue, if conduct and character depend upon will-power (as of course they do), Aristotle seems to be perfectly right in saying that the secret of these is ἕξις, or habit or practice: only a trained crew can work the ship.

I know there is a general detestation of the

doctrine of Determinism. People say, "But I *am* free; I *have* the power of choice; I *can* do this and avoid that." If it is a golfer who speaks thus, I can only say in reply, "Then, why don't you keep your eye on the ball?"

## LIX

Now comes the question of questions. Why must we keep our eye on the ball? Whence arises the necessity? Wherein consists the peculiar efficacy of fixing the gaze on that little round object at our feet — or at its top — or at its back — or at the turf behind, as the case may be? What happens if we *do* look? What happens if we do *not* look? These be important questions.

J. H. Taylor, as we have seen, declines to discuss them. "The secret of success in golf," he says, is "keeping the eye unswervingly upon the ball"; and there he leaves it. It was left to Mr. Walter J. Travis to hit the nail on the head. "The time-honored injunction laid down by all writers and teachers to 'keep your eye on the ball' — which eye, by-the-way? — would be more aptly expressed by insisting upon the head

being kept absolutely still and in the same position as in the address until the ball is struck — or even a moment after. . . . If the head is kept in the same position throughout the swing, the player may even go so far as to absolutely shut his eyes and be reasonably certain of getting the ball well away, provided no jerk is introduced." [1] Mrs. Gordon Robertson, Golf Professional at Princes' Ladies' Golf Club, Mitcham, England, goes, indeed, further still. "Before a beginner attempts to handle her clubs there is one thing which she is always told, and that is, 'Keep your eye on the ball.' In the course of my teaching I have noticed something which, in my opinion, is even still more important. . . . It is this: 'Keep your head still.' By doing this it is impossible to take your eye off the ball." [2]

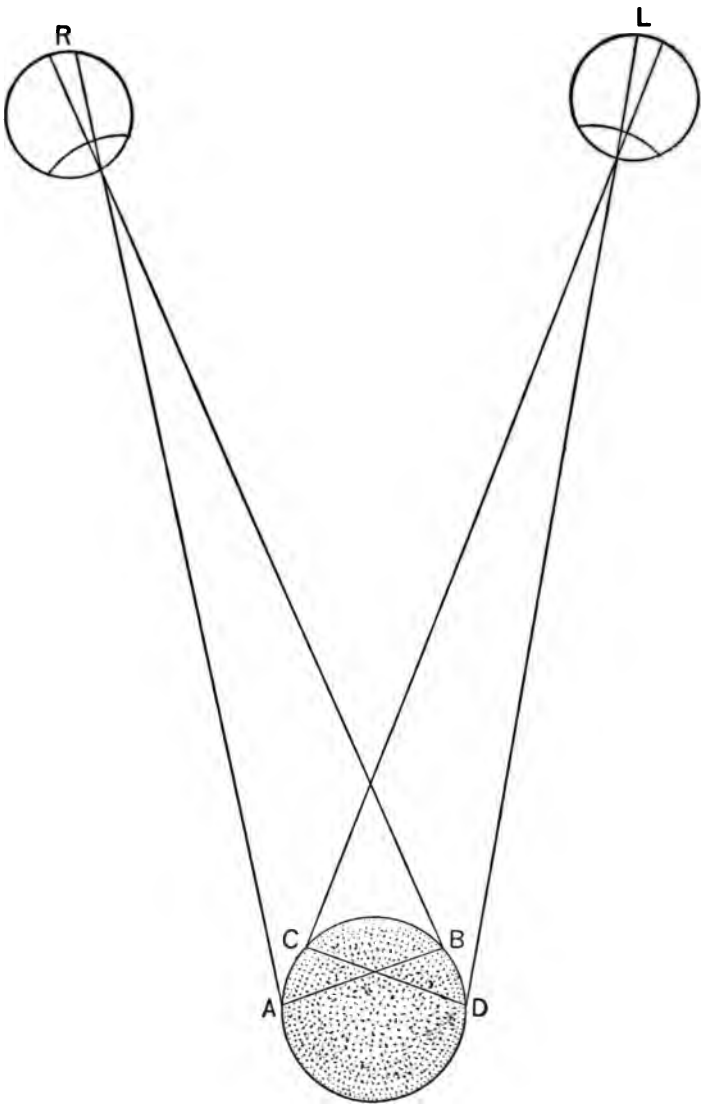
Both would be absolutely right, if . . . if we could keep head and body perfectly steady. But I am afraid that, to ordinary mortals, to ensure that steadiness, and to ensure the proper swing of the arms, it is necessary to look. Oph-

[1] *Practical Golf.* By Walter J. Travis. Pp. 19, 20. New York and London: Harper and Brothers. 1901.

[2] *Hints to Lady Golfers.* By Mrs. Gordon Robertson. *Pp. 9, 10.* London: Walbrook and Co. 1909.

thalmologists tell us that it is through the two organs of vision chiefly that we form an idea of solidity, of distance, of the spaces between things, and of the number of inches, feet, or yards at which objects are situated from our bodies. They say that the image of an object in one eye is slightly different from the image in the other eye; and that it is somehow owing to this difference that we get an idea of distance. To look at a small object near you, the eye-balls have to converge or point inwards. If you look at your nose, the right eye sees the right-hand side of the nose, and the left eye sees the left-hand side, and you conclude that your nose is very near your eyes. Well, when you look at your ball, your right eye sees more of the right side of it, the left more of the left, and you conclude that the ball is just so far away — how far, only long and persistent practice will tell you. A diagram will make this plain.

In this diagram (much simplified and greatly exaggerated), the right eye sees the part of the ball from A to B; the left eye, the part from C to D; and according to the difference between A–B and C–D we judge of the distance of ball from eye. Now, in all probability, unless the eyes are

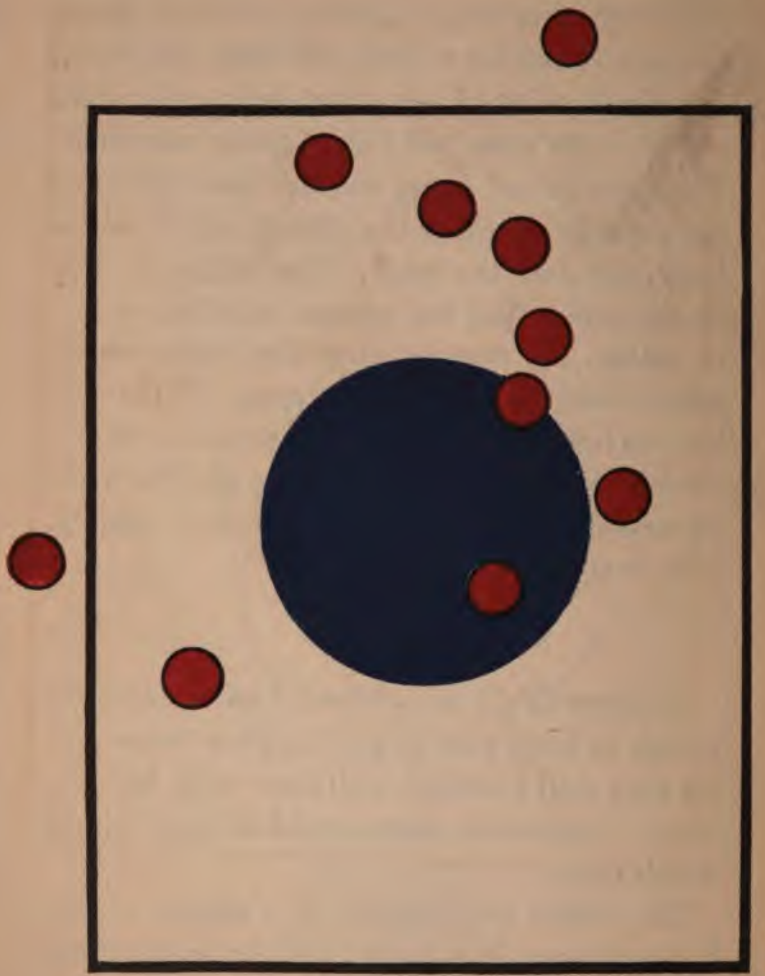

R
L
C
B
A
D

accurately taking note of this difference, are accurately measuring distance, not only at the moment of impact of club with ball, but during the whole swing of the arms, during the whole stroke — the arms will fail to swing accurately. The arms do not judge distance (save when we are actually touching something), nor does the body, nor does the head. The judging is done by the eyes. And the muscles obey the eyes — or rather, the muscles obey the motor centres as previously advised by the eyes. If the eyes look up before the ball is hit, the muscles do not receive the proper orders to hit, and the most important part of the stroke is done blindly. That is my theory.

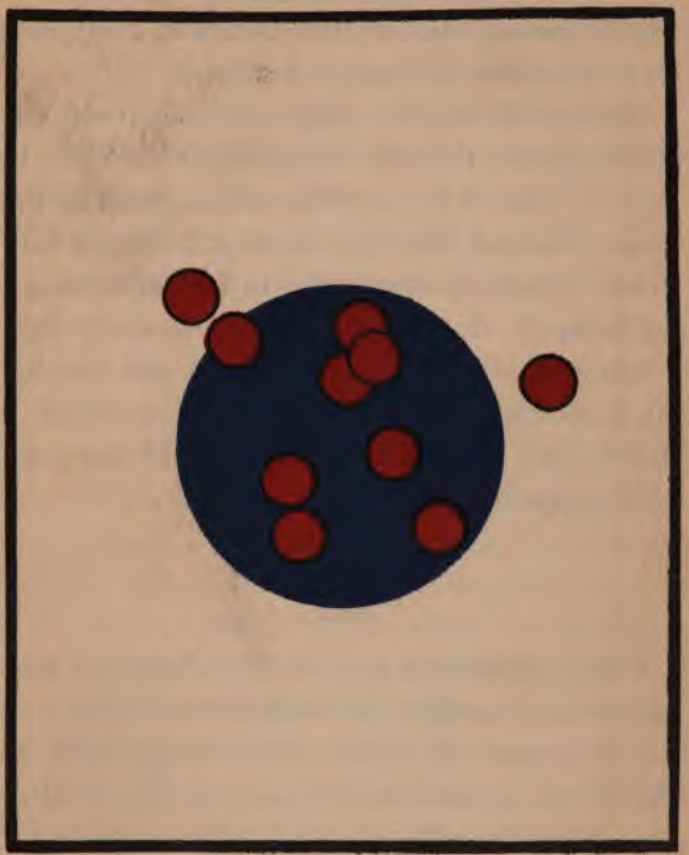
## LX

To prove this, I got a friend of mine, an expert fencer, to lunge at a target, first, ten times with his eyes shut; second, ten times with his eyes open. I reproduce photographs of these targets in this order.

The results are apparent at a glance. — And this, mind you, in a stroke infinitely simpler than the drive (being performed by one arm only, and forearm and wrist being rigid throughout), and



I. Eyes shut.



II. Eyes open.

very much shorter and swifter: the distance between point of foil and target being about two feet six inches, and the time occupied, I suppose, an infinitesimal fraction of a second.

But surely almost every movement of our bodies proves that the muscles are obedient to the eyes, cannot act properly unless guided by the eyes. Why, at this very moment I may be said to have taken my stance and to be "addressing" my ink-pot. I address it for hours every day. I know exactly where it is, and I am keeping my head steady. Yet every time I want ink I *have* to look at that ink-pot. — Could one even light a pipe blindfolded? [1]

## LXI

Lastly, remember that, in order that we may judge very carefully of direction and distance, the eyes must be rigidly fixed on the ball, so that the images on the retinæ may (1) not alter by a hair's breadth during the stroke; and (2) may fall on the most sensitive parts of the retinæ. One could look at one's ball, and yet, if one rolled

[1] Not, I think, unless one hand helps to guide the other holding the bowl. Try it, reader.

the eye-balls, one could sway the head. But, to most men this would be fatal. It is the rigidity, fixity, and continuity of the look that (1) steadies the head and (2) guides the muscles. In this lies the whole importance of this immemorial and incomparable injunction, Keep your Eye on the Ball.

However, after all, it matters precious little *why* one must keep one's eye on the ball. The golfer who does not keep it there soon enough finds out, empirically, as the philosophers say, that unless he can and does, the ball never goes right. — It is extraordinary how extremely difficult to many men this extremely simple thing is. The novice, of course, knows nothing about the difficulty. He is so absorbed in the business in hand (so new to him) that he stares intently at the ball, and on that very account often plays (for a time) remarkably well. When he arrives at that dangerous stage of the game at which he begins to be anxious about his stance and his grip and his stroke, when he wonders what he ought to do and how he is going to do it . . . ah! then perhaps he will think upon this, my otherwise intolerably long-drawn-out disquisition. — As to the layman, he to whom golf

appears to be a pass-time most puerile, he will think this my disquisition a waste-time most pitiful.

## LXII

But apart from all these theories, I have sometimes thought that there are two simple and especial reasons for this difficulty of keeping one's eye on the ball: First, because there is nothing to stimulate the attention; second, because one has to attend so long. In cricket, tennis, racquets, as I have shown, the stimulus is extreme; by consequence, your eye follows the ball like a hawk. In billiards there is no stimulus, but you rarely, if ever, take your eye off your ball in billiards. Why? I think because (1) the ball is so near to the eye — and, therefore, the stimulus strong; (2) because the period of time requisite for the stroke is so short. In golf there is no stimulus and the period is always long: you have to look at your ball for more than the whole period of the upward and downward swings. And this covers a computable number of seconds. In all probability the intensity of the attention very soon tires the delicate cerebral cells so attending. I imagine these cells to be in a state of

tremendous tension. Perhaps this tremendous tension can be kept up for only a very short period of time. No doubt the tension depends upon the blood-supply. Well, there are about seventy-two pulse-beats in the minute. Five-sixths of a second, therefore, may alter the character and the intensity of the tension. — I cannot prove this; but does it not sound plausible?

Besides, as Höffding says, "A completely uniform and unchanged condition [*exempli gratia*, a stationary and insignificant golf-ball] has a tendency to arrest consciousness [and, therefore, attention]. Uniform impressions . . . have a somniferous effect. . . . Staring at one special point produces a sort of border state [between consciousness and unconsciousness]; . . . by being made to fix attention on a single point, a person can be put in a *hypnotic* or somnambulent condition." [1] — I have heard golfers attributing their mistakes to many and various causes; but never yet have I heard one trace them to hypnosis or somnambulism. Herr Professor Harald Höffding has provided us with a fresh excuse for a foozle!

[1] *Outlines of Psychology.* Translated by Mary E. Lowndes. P. 45. Italics Höffding's.

## LXIII

And here, just a word on the follow-through, because this is intimately connected with the eye-on-the-ball. Indeed, my friend Mr. Kenyon-Stow, in an interesting conversation I had with him, averred that the whole and sole virtue of the follow-through depends upon the fact that that follow-through is proof that you have kept your eye upon the ball. If you *don't* keep your eye upon the ball, your stroke is cut short the moment you take your eye off; if you *do* keep your eye upon the ball, your stroke is not cut short and you do follow-through; because, I suppose, when the eye ceases to observe, the mind ceases to give orders. Mr. Kenyon-Stow's theory seems to throw a light upon the theory of Braid. The fact probably is that if the mind is really attending to the retinal image of the ball, the orders issued to the motor centres of the arms will continue just so long as the image of the ball continues upon the retina; and as the retinal image continues for one-fortieth of a second after the object has departed, the stroke is continued for at least that one-fortieth of a second, and the follow-through is established.

It is at all events indisputable that any photograph showing a good follow-through shows the player looking at the spot where the ball was, after the ball had left it; proving that he was really looking at the moment when he hit.

But another important thing about the follow-through, surely, is this. As Mr. Travis has pointed out, such is the resilience of the rubber ball, that club and ball are in contact for an appreciable period of time — the impact, that is, is not instantaneous. It is highly probable that the trajectory of the ball is largely influenced by this period of contact. If you follow through, your club-head travels in precisely the same line as the ball, and the flight of the ball is, by this, rendered straighter, steadier, and longer. We must remember that the stroke in golf is not circular; that is to say, the club-head does not describe the arc of a single circle. The pivot upon which the spinal column rotates is shifted from the head of the right thigh-bone to that of the left; so that, in the downward swing, the path described by the club-head is composed of the arcs of two circles joined by a tangent common to both. At the bottom of the swing, therefore, the club-head is, or should be, mov-

ing in a straight line. Probably it is when the greatest acceleration in the velocity of the club, and the strongest wrist-action in the swing of the arms, occur in this straight portion of the stroke, that the follow-through is most efficacious. This probably it is that constitutes the follow-through and causes that fine free action of shoulders and arms which gives its name to the movement. But William Park, Jr., told us something like this long ago. "When the follow-through is properly carried out," he says, "the club-head travels after the ball in the same line in which it is intended to be driven." [1]

## LXIV

At all events, it is indisputable that different kinds of strokes produce different kinds of trajectories. — The which, if we think for a moment, is natural. A piece of wood (or iron), with a centre of gravity, travelling fast, in a certain plane, and along a certain arc, impinges on a piece of India-rubber (also with a centre of gravity). Unless the line joining these centres of gravity is mathematically straight, and is in

[1] *The Game of Golf.* Second edition. P. 78.

the line of flight, all sorts of things may happen: a slice, or a hook, or a deleterious spin, according to arc, plane, and direction. — You see, it must be a *line* that joins the centres of gravity, not an arc of a circle; for the ball describes (I suppose something in the nature of) a parabola, and starts off to all intents and purposes straight.[1]

But the trajectory of the golf-ball has puzzled many, not only amateur golfers, but learned mathematicians. Mr. Tait's father arrived at theoretic conclusions which his son by practical demonstration refuted. Much, too, depends on the markings on your ball — proving that always a certain spin is communicated by club to ball. The ball that travels farthest is one with depressions or dimples separated (I believe) by areas about the size of three-penny pieces.[2] — However, all conclusions about the trajectory of the golf-ball are empirical. Nor need they detain us here, interesting as they are. Assuredly the most consummate knowledge of ballistics would not improve the drive if the driver took his eye off his ball.

[1] I take it it would be a parabola were it not acted on by the atmosphere.

[2] *Teste* Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey.

## LXV

I have sometimes thought that if a man were to say to himself, "For the next three months I shall drop books, dispense with the Pro, and go round my links every day trying hard to do nothing else but to obey this one simple little rule, Keep your Eye upon the Ball," — I have sometimes thought that the man who had determination enough to do that, would . . . would some day wake up to find that his handicap had been very suddenly cut down by the Committee having the management of those affairs. — As in Life, so in Golf, we busy ourselves with too many and too multifarious affairs. In Life, were a man to say to himself just this: "I will be in earnest," — even about the most trivial of things, it seems to me he would get on. Even if he were not very intelligent, he would be trustworthy. And in Golf, if a man were to say to himself just this: "I will look at my ball," he too would get on.

You must address the ball in the Imperative Mood, not in the Subjunctive or Interrogative. Remember this. You must say to yourself: "*Do it*"; not, "How shall I do it?" or "I wonder

whether I can do it." That way failure lies: for it proves that you are not sure of yourself, and never upon this earth was anything done by any one who was not sure of himself. In fact, your theorist is not apt to make a good golfer. He has not enough steadiness of purpose; his temperament is not equable enough. I would back Horatio against Hamlet on the links. Perhaps of all the *dramatis personæ* of *Hamlet* the best golfer would be the First Grave-Digger, that absolute knave, so precise, so sure, so slow, so careful; — and the worst assuredly would be that water-fly Osric.

The fact is, as Stout has pointed out, "Attention is mental activity." [1] Of course. And the mind never stands still, never stops working — except in sleep. All consciousness, all thought, is a flux of ideas or feelings. We cannot hold any one single isolated idea in the field of consciousness for any length of time. Yet this is precisely what the golfer, when he sets himself to keep his eye on the ball, is called upon to do. He must keep his eye there from before the beginning of the upward swing until after the moment of impact — and, by a stop-watch, I have determined this to be between two and three

[1] *Analytic Psychology.* By G. F. Stout, Vol. I, p. 125.

seconds, though no doubt the period of time occupied in the swing varies very much in different strokes, in different persons, and in the same person at different times.

Herein lies the difficulty. If I am right, then we may accept Braid's explanation and say that the optic nerve works faster than the arms, because the flux of ideas in the mind is more rapid than the swing. — This, you see, is why that slow, sure, careful, absolute knave, the First Grave-Digger, would play well, and that volatile, shallow-pated, feather-brained water-fly Osric would not. — Archimedes would have been a good attender (and, therefore, looker-at-the-ball), he who, so the legend goes, was, in the siege of Syracuse, slain by a soldier while intent on a mathematical problem. Socrates would have been a good attender, he who, so Plato tells us through the mouth of Alcibiades, could stand fixed in thought from dawn till dawn.[1] Izaak Walton would have made a good attender, he who studied to be quiet,[2] and angled and wrote of angling while England was torn with the conflict between Royalist and Roundhead. Hegel would

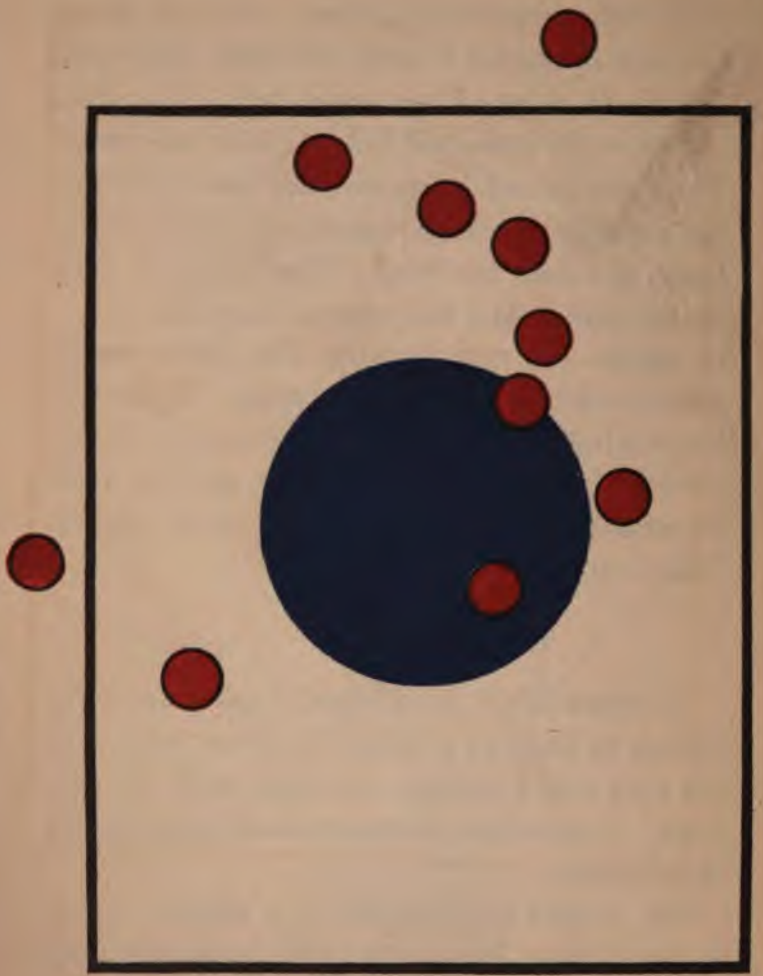
[1] See Plato, *Symposium*, 220 C.

[2] See *The Compleat Angler*, last page.

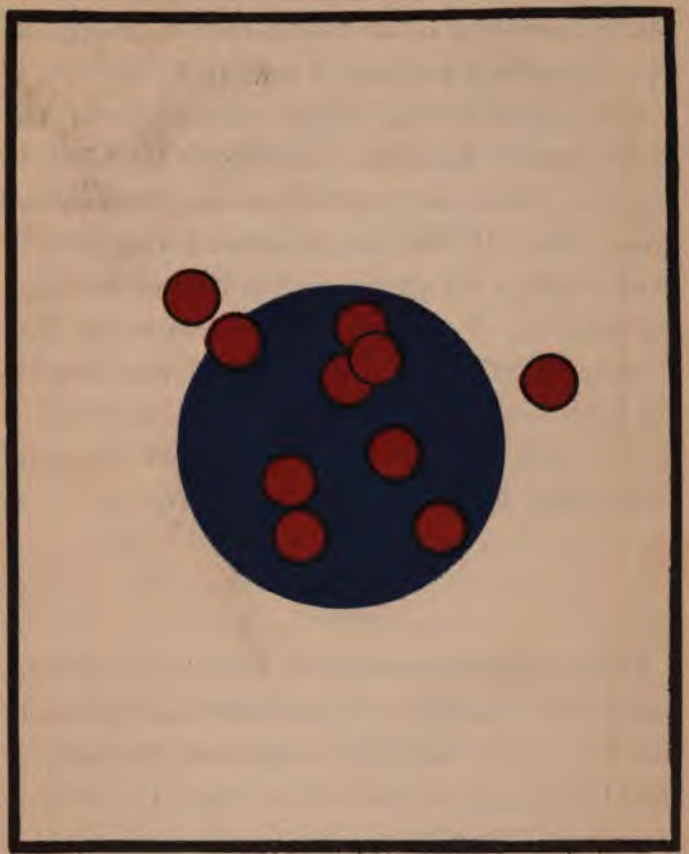
have been a good attender, he who composed the concluding pages of his *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes* while the artillery of Napoleon thundered on the field of Jena.

## LXVI

And here, apropos of steadiness and carefulness, let me say a word upon the waggle. (I can hear the non-golfing reader laughing me to scorn for writing a paragraph on the "waggle"!) Serious, erudite, and practical golfers have insisted upon the importance of the waggle. They are right. But they do not know the *fons et origo* of the importance of the waggle. Yet these are simple, and can be simply explained. — Karl Groos has shown us that the fount and origin of the highest form of human "attention" can be found low down in animal life. When a cat lies in wait for a mouse, or stands ready to flee from a dog, every muscle is alert, is ready for a spring. Were the muscles not alert, Mr. Cat could not spring. For any one set of muscles to do any one thing to the very best of their ability, psychological investigation has shown that a lot of other muscles must be in readiness to be



I. Eyes shut.



II. Eyes open.

certain defeat, — and of a surety to the taking of your eye off your ball, — cease you from theorizing in a match. For, to think out a stroke implies diffidence or incompetence in that stroke; and than diffidence or incompetence there is not a more fatal foe to golf.

What an extraordinary game it is!

## LXVIII

And yet, to the ordinary man — before he has learned to play — there seems to be nothing extraordinary in golf. On the contrary, golf seems to him a game in which the most ordinary man might excel. It evidently does not require immense strength. Heavyweights and lightweights both play it. It does not depend upon mere agility — as does tennis; or stolidity — as does football; or swiftness — as does lacrosse; or deftness — as do billiards. You take a very ordinary-looking club, and you hit a very commonplace-looking ball into a very obvious hole — that is "Golf" — so the ordinary man, before he has learned to play, thinks; and that he ' ll very soon excel in using that club and in *ng that ridiculous* ball into that absurd hole

seems to him the most reasonable thing in the world. Why all this pother about it, all this talk about it? he says to himself; and he listens with a wonderment not unmixed with amusement to the endless hows and whys and wherefores that he hears most earnestly discussed. But when he has begun to try to play a little, what exasperates the ordinary man about golf is that it seems to be a game utterly and absolutely unamenable to reason. You may speculate in stocks; you may lay odds on a horse-race; but the money-market and the turf are child's play compared with the uncertainties of golf; — and this in spite of the fact that, though you cannot control the market, and know your horse only by hearsay, on the links it is on your own individual efforts that you count. And yet, apparently, upon your own individual efforts you never really can count. — My opponent to-day had had a bad night; so he dolefully told me, and expected defeat. What was the result? His record round for his links! — No; golf is not amenable to reason. — And here we find another factor in the extraordinary fascination of the game. — The unknown, says Tacitus, is always the wondered at. Well, metaphysics,

golf, and the feminine heart will be wondered at long.

But from a search for the causes of the uniqueness of golf, we have been led into devious paths, indeed. Return we to the former. —

## LXIX

That golf is a game unique need be proved to no golfer. He knows it only too well — often to his cost. "Are you playing this autumn?" I asked the other day of a stalwart jurisprudent — and jurisprudents, I take it, are among the sanest and coolest-headed of men. "No; I dare not," was his reply; "golf with me is a disease, and I am too busy to play"; and the answer raised not even a smile among the smoking-room audience of the Club — which fact, perhaps, was as significant as the reply. "Golf to me," said another lover of the game, "means health, strength, energy, and ambition"; and I trow not but that he meant these beneficial properties extended far beyond the links.

And is there any other game which one can play all by one's self with so much enjoyment? The Duffer can invent for himself a nice, fat,

easy-going, corpulent Colonel of, say, an average of six per hole as his antagonist; men high up in the handicap have always Bogey; scratch men can compete with Par; and it is always open to those happy gentlemen who stand at "plus" to construct for themselves a Colonel, lean of girth, keen in skill, and as austere and severe as they will.

## LXX

Golf is indeed a curious, perhaps to some a dangerous, game. If its lure once gets into the blood, it is nearly as difficult to cure as cancer. — "Well, I have been thinking about it," said a disconsolate friend to me the other day — he had strained his arm by too much play and was interdicted the links for a month by his doctor; "I have been thinking over it, and I dare say I shall find something else to do." — He did: he spent three hours daily in practising putting. — But a funny thing happened to this persistent practiser of putting. When first he played again, he was defeated; and when I asked him in the dressing-room afterwards the cause of his defeat, "My putting," was the answer! — The non-golfer will think this a funny incident, but

I can tell him a funnier. I related this (true) story to a Scotsman this afternoon, a good golfer, one who had played from childhood. What was his comment? He made no comment at all! The Scot regarded the defeat as a matter in the ordinary course of the inscrutable ways of Providence. — How I wish that wonderful Scot Tammas Carrlyle had played gouf! If that immortal genius, instead of narrating in lurid, horrid [1] tongue the story of the French Revolution or the history of Friedrich II, of Prussia, had plotted out at lonely Ecclefechan even only a nine-hole course, without Pro or Club or caddie, and had gone round that nine-hole course as only Thomas Carlyle would have gone round. . . . Losh! what a buik the warld has lossit! Him, of all men, I pick out, because he, more than any man, combined, as rarely, if ever, they have been so intimately combined, those two precious things: a deep seriousness, and a humorousness as deep. In anything in which he interested himself he interested himself intensely

[1] Etymologically only, of course. *Cf.* Cicero: ". . . *ut vita, sic oratione, durus, incultus, horridus.*" — *Brutus, sive De clar. Orat.* c. 31. To me Carlyle's unsmooth tongue is a source of endless delight.

— and always with a touch of humour. There is a story told of him that he was once asked to take part in family prayers — the whole family being gathered together before breakfast, the servants in a row against the wall. He was to read the chapter for the day — one in the Book of Job. He got so interested in Job, that he went on reading chapter after chapter, chapter after chapter — to the consternation of conventional hostess, and hungry family, and impatient servants. — Undoubtedly Carlyle would have played golf as he read Job.

"I wonder if you would ever have married me, if you had taken up golf before you proposed," said a wife once. — It is related, too, of a famous Anglican Divine — a Doctor of Divinity (and I think this story is not quite a chestnut) — that, having come under the spell of the sport, in a burst of unecclesiastical frankness he confided to a friend that there was that in the game which made him forget his wife, his family, his country, and his God.

— But, how shallow, how inane, are the majority of the anecdotes of golf! They touch only the surface of the game, and only the surface of the character of those who play thereat. I have

listened by the hour to stories of golf, and I have read stories of golf by the score — all to no purpose. So shallow, so inane are the stories that I have been driven to try to find out why it is that when men tell and write anecdotes about golf they tell and write such trivial things. The reason, I suspect, is twofold: first, probably, the stories derive from shallow-pated caddies who, though they play admirably, play automatically, and have never exercised any introspective analysis of their play; second, one never unbosoms one's self or bares one's heart in the smoking-room, where these stories are incubated and hatched. So severe, so exacting, so compelling are the claims made by golf upon the conscience and character of man, that the golfer could and would no more discuss the intellectual and psychical trials and tribulations through which he had passed in the course of a strenuous round to the smoking and sipping audience of the smoke-room of his Club, than he would discuss the variations of his emotions during Matins or High Mass. Golf stories are the exhaust-steam of golf. The golfer has, during eighteen holes, kept his hand so steadily on the throttle of his emotions, that, *ntally* excited, and with fires well stoked, in

the Club he leans back in his chair and relaxes; and, brain and mind being by this time stimulated and alert, brain and mind find vent for stimulation and alertness, — and perhaps the conscience finds solace in subterfuge — in the trivialities and puerilities of the game. It is these trivialities and puerilities that get recorded and printed; not the curses which the erring golfer silently pours down upon his own head for his heedlessness and carelessness; not his imprecations upon his folly and his stupidity; not his frightful remorse or his deep resolves; not his asseverations and animadversions and prevarications and recalcitrations; not his desperate struggles with his self; but just the flippant remarks which, to ease his conscience and give vent to his emotions, he utters to an audience in like mood with himself. — Golf stories are a disgrace to golf. I have been told golf stories (terrible chestnuts, of course) by folk who did not play golf, and I felt ashamed that folk who did not play golf had ever heard such stories. I felt that the narrators judged of golf by the stories. It was as if they had joked about my Creed or about my Father Confessor. — Does this sound like sacrilege? Surely not. For, look you,

## LXXI

To all men golf is a revelation. To some it is an invaluable boon. Certain men I know — and no doubt there are scores of such — in whom golf brought about a veritable conversion; men to whom the workaday week was so full of difficult and delicate, of wearing and worrying tasks, — in the office, in the counting-house, in the surgery, in the study, or the studio, — that they were wont too often to intercalate at the week-end, as offset to the period of too high thinking, a period of too high living — to the detriment of their nerves, to the detriment of that very intellectual ability and tact so necessary to them in their work. To such, golf, when it was taken up as golf should alone be taken up, seriously, steadfastly, persistently, this innocuous pass-time, proved an apocalypse, a revelation in the real sense of that word: work was forgotten; the difficult tasks were left from Saturday to Monday to take care of themselves; the mind was relaxed; the attention was drawn away to more healthy if less lucrative problems; the lungs received that quantum of oxygen denied them *within* doors; the bodily frame was exercised and

reinvigorated; and the tired, worried, and much-beset man returned to his labours rejuvenated and refreshed. The game gives to such men just that amount of physical exercise which their muscular anatomy demands. Too strenuous a pass-time would tire, not restore; too trifling an one would leave the mind free to dwell upon its cares. So, on the one hand, football or a paper-chase would be out of the question; and so, on the other, would croquet. But golf — golf gives to both mind and body precisely what mind and body crave: the one, something to stimulate and yet to divert it; the other a not too exacting activity. For to each of us is given just such an amount of vital energy — just so much and no more. We may spend it in a too vigorous muscular exertion, in which case the balance to the credit of the mind runs low; or we may expend it in a too exacting mental exertion, in which case the body suffers, the nerves lose tone, and at last the fund of vital energy (which only the bodily frame can store up) is so depleted that the anatomical bank refuses to honour one's cheques. Golf seems to afford to the intellectual man just that wise mean between two extremes which Aristotle held to be the chief

of virtues. Happy that intellectual man who discovers this source of health before it is too late.

Be it remembered, too, that for the intellectual man must be chosen a form of recreation which appeals to his intellect. Never can his mind be called upon suddenly to lie absolutely idle. It cannot be idle. It seeks always a different, a novel form of activity. So, the intellectual man flies to bridge, or to whist, or to chess. — I have known him to sit by the hour together all by himself over patience or solitaire. Well, if there is any kind of recreation which calls for a different and novel form of mental activity *par excellence*, it is golf. It not only calls for it; it gives scope for it. Numberless are the aspects under which golf might be studied. I have sometimes thought that a whole university staff of professors might be turned loose on the links, and that each would find there for himself a field of thought upon which he could bring to bear his own particular and specialized store of knowledge. For the philosopher and the psychologist I think that even this my little treatise has shown that there is abundance of material. For the botanist and the zoölogist there are, of course, in the intervals of the game, all the fauna and

flora of the links. For the mathematician — well, we know as a matter of fact that eminent mathematicians have found in the flight of the golf-ball problems baffling enough even for them. The ethnologist can compare the styles of play of different races of men — by no means an uninteresting matter for observation and speculation. (Indeed, I have heard it gravely debated whether or not the brachycephalic stirps of men did not play a better game than the dolichocephalic.) For the philologist there is the rich and variegated vocabulary of the irate or malcontent player. "But," my too critical reader will exclaim, "there are your political economists, your classical men, your teachers of literature." For them, I reply, there is the companionship of intelligent men and the numerous opportunities for interchange of thought in the quiet talks before and after a game. Besides, even the most scholarly of men, even university professors, ought to be, if they are not, interested in their fellow-men; and I know no sport in which there are more abundant opportunities for studying your fellow-man than there are in golf. If you want to know your man, play golf with him. Not even in the prize-ring does man so meet

man. You may box with a man for a month and know him only as a boxer. I defy you to play golf with a man for a week without finding out a great deal more about him than just what sort of a golfer he is. Again, there is not much humour in the prize-ring. On the links I have seen men put aside their clubs and lie their length on the grass, overcome with laughter at the antics — both temperamental and gesticulatory — of their friends. Again, too, subtile idiosyncrasies of character rarely reveal themselves in the ring. On the links they are observable at every step. — Never shall I forget a certain hole I played with a certain man. Between seventeenth tee and hole yawned a deep ravine. Into that ravine my opponent drove his ball. After his ball he flung his driver. And after his driver he flung a string of vocables I dare not reproduce here, even if my memory (incapacitated by my mirth) had retained them. He gave the hole up and stalked at once indignantly, silently, wrathfully, majestically, all the way down and up the hill to the eighteenth tee. Arrived there, he remembered his driver. As we had no caddies, he had to stalk back and forth all the way over again, *cluding* a descent into that avernal ravine. —

To this day I cannot recall that incident without laughter. — Laughter? Yes, there is scope on the links for laughter. — And for much else: for pity, and forgiveness, and a wise toleration, and long-suffering, and brotherly kindness. . . .

To one dear man in my Club do I owe much. To many I owe what I can never repay; but this man I single out here, for because others might follow his example. His toleration, his long-suffering, his brotherly kindness to me a duffer, were beyond all praise. Giving me my handicap, he treated me as an equal, and at every stroke he so gently reproved or approved, that at once I was at my ease and played well. He comforted and consoled. Quiet and thoughtful over his own strokes, he made me quiet and thoughtful over mine. Though I was his combatant, he, as it were, took me into partnership; for he saw that the combat was, not betwixt him and me, but betwixt him and himself and me and myself, and he helped me to conquer myself. — That was a whole-souled and generous golfer. — I need not add that in social life that generous golfer's character stands unimpugned and unimpugnable. — Did all scratch golfers treat duffers thus, young golfers would improve.

At bottom perhaps golf is a conflict between character and character. The character of your opponent is one of the chiefest factors in the game. For two or three hours at a stretch you and he are set a-going alone by yourselves to see who can outdo the other — outdo the other in patience, perseverance, endurance, reserve-force, courage, sustained effort, resource in difficulty, equanimity, imperturbability, audacity, strategy — in all the intimate and intricate proclivities and potentialities lying hidden in the human soul. I have seen a man who, when drawn against a champion of note, went, in spite of his generous handicap, to the business in hand in so hang-dog a manner, that the gallery, as he attempted to drive, at once tacitly predicted his defeat. Another man I have seen who, when pitted against that same champion, played with such coolness and judgement that the champion was sore put to it to gain him the lead. — Assuredly from this point of view also the game is unique.

## LXXII

Is this uniqueness explicable? Well, perhaps *in no* other game, for one thing, are you obliged,

or have you time, so intensely to concentrate your every faculty on your every stroke. In no other game have you so to be master of yourself, as it were to steady yourself, — your muscles, your nerves, your brain, nay, your mood and your temper, — or to be master of yourself for so long a stretch. Four or five score strokes must be made, some of them with the strength of a sledge-hammer, many of them with the delicacy of a microtome, all of them with the precision of a machine; and so to bring under this unruly body of ours, with its mobile muscles, its ebullient blood, its unquiet nerves, its perturbable brain, as to achieve that feat . . . one has to pass through much tribulation or ere that feat is even approximately achieved. In no other game are you left so desperately alone. In no other game does all depend upon your individual effort. There is nothing to hamper you, nothing to hinder you, nothing to hurry you.

Golf is so deliberate that the mind has ample time in which to act — another feature which differentiates it from other sports. In fact, the difference between a rapid game like tennis and a deliberate game like golf is similar to the difference between playing a piece of music with which

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## LXXI

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reinvigorated; and the tired, worried, and much-beset man returned to his labours rejuvenated and refreshed. The game gives to such men just that amount of physical exercise which their muscular anatomy demands. Too strenuous a pass-time would tire, not restore; too trifling an one would leave the mind free to dwell upon its cares. So, on the one hand, football or a paper-chase would be out of the question; and so, on the other, would croquet. But golf — golf gives to both mind and body precisely what mind and body crave: the one, something to stimulate and yet to divert it; the other a not too exacting activity. For to each of us is given just such an amount of vital energy — just so much and no more. We may spend it in a too vigorous muscular exertion, in which case the balance to the credit of the mind runs low; or we may expend it in a too exacting mental exertion, in which case the body suffers, the nerves lose tone, and at last the fund of vital energy (which only the bodily frame can store up) is so depleted that the anatomical bank refuses to honour one's cheques. Golf seems to afford to the intellectual man just that wise mean between two extremes which Aristotle held to be the

## LXXI

To all men golf is a revelation. To some it is an invaluable boon. Certain men I know — and no doubt there are scores of such — in whom golf brought about a veritable conversion; men to whom the workaday week was so full of difficult and delicate, of wearing and worrying tasks, — in the office, in the counting-house, in the surgery, in the study, or the studio, — that they were wont too often to intercalate at the week-end, as offset to the period of too high thinking, a period of too high living — to the detriment of their nerves, to the detriment of that very intellectual ability and tact so necessary to them in their work. To such, golf, when it was taken up as golf should alone be taken up, seriously, steadfastly, persistently, this innocuous pass-time, proved an apocalypse, a revelation in the real sense of that word: work was forgotten; the difficult tasks were left from Saturday to Monday to take care of themselves; the mind was relaxed; the attention was drawn away to more healthy if less lucrative problems; the lungs received that quantum of oxygen denied them within doors; the bodily frame was exercised and

reinvigorated; and the tired, worried, and much-beset man returned to his labours rejuvenated and refreshed. The game gives to such men just that amount of physical exercise which their muscular anatomy demands. Too strenuous a pass-time would tire, not restore; too trifling an one would leave the mind free to dwell upon its cares. So, on the one hand, football or a paper-chase would be out of the question; and so, on the other, would croquet. But golf — golf gives to both mind and body precisely what mind and body crave: the one, something to stimulate and yet to divert it; the other a not too exacting activity. For to each of us is given just such an amount of vital energy — just so much and no more. We may spend it in a too vigorous muscular exertion, in which case the balance to the credit of the mind runs low; or we may expend it in a too exacting mental exertion, in which case the body suffers, the nerves lose tone, and at last the fund of vital energy (which only the bodily frame can store up) is so depleted that the anatomical bank refuses to honour one's cheques. Golf seems to afford to the intellectual man just that wise mean between two extremes which Aristotle held to be the chief

implement. If, when you are five yards from the hole, with that putt for the game, and a gallery looking on (to say nothing of much fame — and more money — on the match), you can putt as if you were alone on your own lawn practising putting for fun . . . Ah! *there* perhaps lies the secret of putting. — Under the portrait of Warren Hastings in the Council Chamber at Calcutta, so Macaulay tells us, were inscribed the words *Mens Æqua in Arduis*. *That* is the prime prerequisite of putting. — I venture to think the great Proconsul would himself have been a præter-natural putter. "Calm but indomitable force of will," says Macaulay, "was the most striking peculiarity of his character. . . . There never was a public man whose temper was so severely tried. . . . But the temper of Hastings was equal to almost any trial. It was not sweet, but it was calm. . . . The effect of this singular equanimity was that he always had the full command of all the resources of one of the most fertile minds that ever existed." [1] — Character, you see, dogs us in every phase of the game.

[1] *Essay on Warren Hastings* in the *Edinburgh Review* of October, 1841.

## LXXIV

How golf bewrays the character! You may know a man for years, yet discover new traits in him on the links. Characteristics long buried beneath convention are suddenly resuscitated; foibles sedulously suppressed spring into existence; hereditary instincts lying dormant reveal themselves. I was once for the first time made aware of the Hibernian origin of a partner by his antics over an astonishing putt which won him the hole: for a moment of time his club might have been a shillelah, his feet moved to a jig. Golf brings out idiosyncrasies and peculiarities. Sometimes it brings out more than these! Hence, perhaps, the innumerability of the anecdotes anent the irrepressibility of profanity while playing the game — a game proverbially provocative of reprehensible expletives. My eyes were lately opened to this sinister peculiarity when playing with a man, the author of a ponderous work, noted for the precision, even for the purism, of his diction. Usually he spake as he wrote, and he wrote for gentlemen learned in the law. To my astonishment, one afternoon, far away in the windle straws on my right (we

had diverged at the tee), proceeded from him the deepest and most earnest consignments to perdition of . . . whether it was himself, or his ball, or his iron, or the sum total of created things, I did not distinctly understand. Not even had he a caddie in whose hearing to ejaculate. It was in the face of pure untainted Nature that he swore; and his deliberate damns sounded like bolts from the blue. Still, they comforted me. They proved to me, the duffer, that to take a foozle philosophically was not to be expected of mortal man. Almost, I begin to think, a false stroke in golf is more keenly felt than is a rejected proposal. The girl may change her mind, but a foozle is an irrevocable foozle, and a hole lost is lost for ever. The inexorability of the game is appalling, and may well unnerve the timorous player. Nothing in the rules of life and conduct is quite so rigid as are the conditions of this simple-seeming so-called "game." A hasty word may be recalled, a miscalculation corrected, a blunder apologized for; but to no man is it given confidently to be able to say that he shall make up for a missed approach by a super-magnificent putt. Master as a man is of *muscles*, on the links too often they seem the

sport of chance. He may do his utmost; exert himself to the sublimest limit of his ability; be cautious as a cat, alert as the lynx, and yet fail to place a simple round ball within three feet of a simple round hole, when only an easily computable number of paltry yards separate one from other. To no one is it given to say, "I shall play the next stroke well." That is curious. If one makes up one's mind to it, and is not thwarted, one can do many things well. How is it that the utmost deliberation, the extremest caution, the most scrupulous care, will often fail to put you where you would be? Almost it would seem that in golf is required that thing called amongst men "genius." One could no more undertake to produce a perfect putt at every attempt than one could undertake to produce a perfect poem. Perhaps this is why the great masters of the art are held in such high esteem, an estimation never quite equalled by that accorded to their fellow-champions in, say, cricket or football. These are not, to my knowledge, asked by enterprising publishers to pose for their stance, or to supply photographs of their attitudes, or to give diagrammatic illustrations, drawn to scale, of their legs and arms.

No; perhaps one of the profoundest secrets of the profound fascination exercised by golf lies in this, that, in spite of the fact that no one may thwart, oppose, or impede, there is no golfer living who could with surety assert that he will positively always do any particular hole in any particular number of strokes. Therein lies the irony of golf. The planets move in orbits exact as mathematics itself. The great balls of the universe are holed-out year by year with a precision which mocks our finest tools. Predict we can to the fraction of a second when Venus will approach the rim of the Sun, or Luna fall into the shadow of the Earth. But man, the master-mechanic of this terrestrial globe, versed in all the laws of parabola and ellipse, can no more govern the flight of his pygmy gutty than he can govern the flight of the summer swallow.

## LXXV

Golf is unique, too, in that it can be played anywhere — on lone seashores or crowded heaths, over high-road and hedge, amid moss and weed, on the veldt, on the prairie, on the *mead.* (Obstacles are but "bunkers" to golf;

the more the merrier. How encomiastic the St. Andrews golfer grows over his bunkers!) Certain links I know, far away on a western continent, a nine-hole course, miles from train or tram. Club-house there is none: you throw your covert coat and your hat over a fence and — play. There are no greens, there are no flags; the player more familiar with the ground goes ahead and gives you the line. The teeing-grounds are marked by the spots where the soil has been scraped by the boot for the where-withal for tees. Bunkers abound, and bad lies in the form of hoof-marks and cart-ruts do much more abound. Sheep and kine roam over them at will. For cooling drink after a heating round, you knock at a farm-house door for water. Yet to these links — and they are beautiful: high, hilly, green, a waving cornfield to your right, rolling pasture to your left, here and there a nodding coppice, and somnolent valleys variegating the scene — to these links daily gaily trudge ardent golfers, carrying clubs under a sub-arctic August sun — proof enough for me of the uniqueness of the game.

## LXXVI

And yet it must be confessed that if this enthusiasm for the game were to be evoked in youths of sixteen or eighteen, and were strong enough to tempt them to forsake the crease or the goal for the links, not every one would applaud the lure. Not every one would be willing to see the youth of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, or of the United States of America, give up their national and traditional games. But there is no likelihood of such a catastrophe. For high spirits and supple joints golf is too sedate. Enthusiasts will play it world without end, as they have played it from time immemorial. And so, perhaps, will spirits that are losing the buoyancy, and joints that are losing the suppleness of youth. But for the masses, golf to-day is a fashion, as much as was tennis a few years ago. To some this will be a hard saying, to others a consolatory one. The thought that his favourite links will some day be not so infested will perhaps give the confirmed and splenetic golfer heart of grace; the thought that his revered pass-time should be subject to fashion will wring from the confirmed

and unsplenetic golfer hearty dissent. Yet that golf is a passing fashion I venture to assert. Cheap balls and iron clubs have put it within the reach of the many. And the many, being usually a body of workers by hand or brain, with only so much money, time, and energy at their disposal, find in this not-too-violent exercise a recreation suited to their limitations. In golf, too, you require only a single partner, not a team; a match can be arranged by telephone in five minutes, and can be finished between office-hours and dinner-time. But when the links become a moving multitude resonant with "'Fores!" when severe competition raises record scores to a point which will kill ambition in the novice and the amateur; when 'Arry and 'Arriet take to afternoon foursomes — as before long they will; why, then it is probable that the many who are not 'Arrys and 'Arriets will look about them for less popular sports. All games, saving only those national and traditional, have their day: as witness, first, archery, then croquet, then tennis, and now golf. Within the precincts of St. Andrews all this will be heresy. But St. Andrews will outlast fashion, as certainly it preceded fashion. Nor, I take it, would St.

Andrews murmur if the popular fashion for golf did some day wane! How many balls already simultaneously encumber that classic ground? But all this very little concerns us here. Golf is in the very infancy of fashion, and will outlast many a generation yet.

What may take the place of golf when it ceases to be a fashion, it is hard to say. Archery, croquet, tennis, will never come in again. The bicycle is now an economic vehicle. Bowling-on-the-green is daily drawing devotees; but it cannot rival golf. Lacrosse is for the agile. Polo is expensive; so would be falconry. The dirigibility of the balloon is still a very long way off, and at present not every one can afford to run the risk of being dumped five hundred miles from home. Aviation by aeroplanes is for the few. Horse-racing and yachting are for kings or millionaires. Fencing is for the leisured and the cultured. Perhaps, when motor-cars come within measurable distance of purchasability by ordinary-sized purses, and roads are made, as Mr. H. G. Wells would have them, sensibly broad, we may see some startling sport. Speed is a tremendous intoxicant. When 'Arry can *'ire a heighty*-'orsepower hauto, there will be

fun — for 'Arry. — But were I to hazard a conjecture, I should be inclined to prophesy a wonderful future for rifle-practice. The weapon is comparatively cheap, so is the ammunition; Morris-tubes and sub-targets are easily erected, and ranges and butts ought to be as obtainable as links. Perhaps, when the soundless rifle has been perfected, we may devise and construct butts and ranges on our lawns. Already rifle-clubs abound, and proficiency in musketry is yearly more highly esteemed — some twenty thousand people turned out to welcome home the King's Prizeman of 1904.

## LXXVII

But at the present moment golf is certainly as fashionable as unique, if we regard the mass of theoretical instruction proffered to the public, purporting to teach them how it should be played. Books, magazines, illustrations, photographs, diagrams, mathematical formulæ, algebraic symbols, and rules without number, appear monthly. The stance, the swing, the address, the waggle — all are solemnly descanted upon. Why? Probably the true answer to this little question is as

disingenuous as it will be disappointing. Cricket, football, tennis, racquets, and the rest, despite the adjectives "royal" and "ancient," are, to the masses, old; they were played by thousands long before the modern craze for scientific accuracy and analysis seized upon theoretic exponents of sport. Golf to the masses is comparatively new. Golf has been taken up by grey heads and stiff joints. And stiff joints and grey heads, unaccustomed to the swing proper to drivers and cleeks, require theoretic instruction. An eminent player and elucidator of the game, expatiating on the multiplicity of the coexisting styles of play, looks forward to the time when some more rigid and scientific analysis of stroke shall be possible, and when some fixed and ideal form shall be evolved. Personally, I look forward to the time when all these elaborate directions as to the precise manner in which some twenty-seven and a half drachms avoirdupois of gutta-percha shall be propelled some two hundred yards shall be regarded as a curious characteristic of a bygone age. Some two thousand years ago Aristotle had the temerity to affirm that the lyre was learned by playing the lyre. *Some two* thousand years hence some golfer

may have the temerity to affirm that golf is learned by playing golf. In proof of which rash assertion I here adduce an illustration as simple and as disappointing as, I feel, is my prediction. There is at my club a little caddie, by name Willie Dobson (note the name, I pray you; it may some day be inscribed on as many clubs as is now the name of Willie Dunn). Willie Dobson just now weighs between five and six stone, measures about four foot two, and is aged *circiter* thirteen years. He has not read Mr. Horace Hutchinson or William Park, Jr., or Taylor, or Herd, or Mr. Low, or Mr. Walter Travis, or Mr. Beldam; he knows not the Badminton Series; he is all unaware that Vardon and Braid have become scribes as well as champions of the game; he has not heard of "advanced golf"; he has not studied instantaneous photographs of distinguished drivers, approachers, and putters; and I seriously doubt whether he has practised before a mirror. The Bogey for my links, as computed by a careful committee for grown-up men, is eighty-one. Well, Willie has done them in eighty-five, and can do them again. Half a century hence he will be asked to write a book on golf. Would I could read it! — To conclude.

Did we all commence golf as Willie Dobson has commenced it, there would be little need of rule or rote. Willie Dobson learned golf by caddying for a St. Andrews golfer.

Not but that, I am fully prepared to admit, there is absolute necessity for commencing the game properly. Perhaps another feature in the uniqueness of golf is that, in it, style counts for so much, so very much. So long as you play with a straight bat in cricket you may run up a score with a poor style; but already in golf I have met men who, by some unaccountable trick of style, had so far got out of the particular knack of the drive, that they had perforce to tee off with a cleek. How many beginners, too, are "off" their irons to-day and "off" their wooden clubs to-morrow. However, I take it these mishaps occur rather to grey-headed and stiff-jointed beginners than to Willie Dobsons or Willie Dunns; although W. Fernie's lamentable performance at Prestwick, in the match for the professional championship in 1887, is a warning even to the expert. Up almost to the days of the match, we are told, he was playing in perfect form; during the contest he heeled ball after *ball.*

## LXXVIII

Few things show so clearly the influence of the mind upon the body as the game of golf. The links, I have sometimes thought, might not seldom with advantage be exchanged for the laboratory by both professors and students of experimental psychology. For example, I have it on very direct evidence, namely, from one of the contestants himself, that one of the greatest matches in the history of golf was in all probability decided on psychological grounds alone. Between the opponents there was little, if any, disparity of skill; but one had the advantage of strength and experience. By means of the first qualification he again and again outdrove his antagonist; by means of the second he retained unshaken, throughout the five days' arduous struggle, his judgement and his nerve. The consequence was, so more than one spectator averred, that the younger adversary was tempted to "press"; and the inevitable and fatal consequence of pressing was loss of accuracy and ultimate defeat. How many golfers, too, either resent or welcome the existence of a "gallery." If there is nothing in golf but a

test of strength and skill, what should matter the presence or the absence of some few score onlooking human folk? What cricketer at Lord's or the Oval gives a thought to the Pavilion? Yet some men a gallery disconcerts, others it stimulates. Assuredly this influence is psychic. The fact is that the judgement and the delicacy requisite in golf are so extreme, so fine, that the minutest perturbation of the nervous system, and therefore of the centres by which the action of the muscles is controlled, affects the accuracy of the stroke. It would be interesting to attach sphygmographs to various golfers, both phlegmatic and mercurial, and to compare the tracings under the varying conditions of the game, — though probably even the pulse-beats are a less delicate criterion of mental perturbation or equanimity than are the drive, the approach, and the putt. A famous Italian experimental psychologist, by name Angelo Mosso, has recently proved by means of a nicely balanced instrument that each and every varying condition of the mind produces a corresponding variation in the circulation of the blood. Just such another nicely balanced instrument is golf. (*Was it* not a famous — or an infamous — golfer

who was once upset by the singing of a da— of a dastardly lark?) The merest tyro soon discovers something of this. Perhaps this is why the tyro is so particular to inquire as to what he should eat and what he should drink and how-withal he should be clothed. —

To the onlooker these minutiæ are, of course, highly amusing. But the amused onlooker little knows on what minute things great golfing matters sometimes turn. There is a fatefulness about golf that is terrorizing. Momentous events often enough hang upon the minutest causes. But nothing even in the realm of the physical sciences is more inexorable or rigid than golf. The centre of gravity of the solid earth, so they tell us, is altered by a footstep. That is conceivable, though it is not perceptible. Yet with my own eyes have I seen a great match between two rival clubs, with twenty players a side, determined by a two-foot putt missed at the eighteenth hole. And did not Alexander Herd, in that extraordinary tournament of the Professional Golfers' Association on the Mid-Surrey links, at Richmond Old Deer-Park, in 1904, just fail of actually defeating Braid, Vardon, and Taylor in succession, by a less than two-foot putt missed

at the seventeenth hole? I have known a club championship to depend upon a stymie at the nineteenth hole. "What will you give us?" said once one pair in a foursome to the other. "O, a stroke on the nineteenth hole," was the jocular reply. By that stroke, by the grimness of fate, that match was decided. — The veteran golfer thinks on these things and ponders them in his heart; and little he recks of the amusement or the derision of the onlooker. *Mathematica mathematicis scribuntur.*

It may be that the recital of such incidents as these, in which eminent golfers made serious mistakes at important crises, is, on the whole, somewhat of a consolation to the duffer, to him to whom, for the time being, golf seems little more than a series of mistakes. And so it may be. And the recital might be abundantly amplified. The champion of a hemisphere once missed the winning of a pewter by taking eleven for a hundred-and-seventy-five-yard hole in which no bunker intervened between teeing-ground and putting-green; a hole which he usually accomplished in three, sometimes in two.[1] And I

[1] It should be told, however, that the course was *narrow*, and that a horrible ravine skirted the green.

once saw one of the most expert of lady golfers, when playing against the lady champion of a great colony, land twice in succession in a water-jump in making a thirty-yard approach, when the lie was perfect, she was three feet from the stream, and the ground was flat! — Yes, such things are consoling to us all. To err is human, even on the links.

## LXXIX

I have sometimes thought, too, that I could detect a curious psychic contagion on the links. It is within every golfer's experience that he finds he plays well against certain opponents and badly against others; and this, not so much on account of the quality of his opponent's game as on account of his temperament or character. You are steadied by one man, you are upset by another; this opponent hurries you and harries you, the other unwittingly calls out your better self. This is highly curious — and highly significant.

I have myself, personally, a tentative explanation of this curious contagion so observable on the links, but I do not press it on my reader, since of it I have no scientific proof. It is this:

From every individual human soul there emanates always a subtile and psychic force, at present inscrutable to man. Human beings are psychically radio-active: they do not only see one another, touch one another, hear one another, smell one another; they affect one another in a very peculiar and supersensible way. As Cardinal Newman quaintly said, "It is a fearful thing that we, as it were, exhale ourselves with every breath we draw." — I say 'super-sensible,' because at present the sense-organ or organs through which one human soul does thus act or impinge upon another human soul has or have not been discovered. Certain insects, we know, possess a sense, a sense probably different from that of sight or touch or smell, by which they are made cognizant of the presence of their fellows. (The antennæ of the bee and the ant are suspected to possess functions of this kind.) Well, man certainly has a sense which apprises him of the presence of his fellows, and so highly developed is this sense that his fellows act upon him and affect him in quite curious manner. Some men are more powerfully psychic than others; but from all men — and from all women — there does emanate a subtile force or energy

not wholly the result of mere appearance or beauty or voice or gesture or strength, and not wholly to be measured by any units known to the chemical, the physical, or the psychological laboratory. — Bring two strangers together: in twenty minutes they have affected each other, and, by that effect of the one upon the other, they have summed up each other in a way that no novelist, depicting them never so minutely, and quoting them never so accurately, could explain them the one to the other. — But we have all experienced this psychic activity. I have seen a big, broad-shouldered man, a good golfer, when playing in a three-ball game, one of the players in which was his petite and delicate fiancée, foozle stroke after stroke, solely on account of the presence of that parvulous girl! — All I can say is this, whether or not in reality any such psychic radio-activity actually there be, and whatsoever may be its source, on the links, if you would shield yourself from extraneous emanations and play your own game, you must make up your mind strenuously to occlude all such effluences from your opponent or your partner, must shut up your own soul and make it impervious to alien forces. There is a hyp-

notism of the sane and the normal and the wide-awake, as there is a hypnotism of the cataleptic trance. There are forces in the body which no dynamometer has determined; there are forces in the soul which no psychomancy has fathomed, no psychometrist has measured. When eye looks into eye, or hand grasps hand, think you it is only the retinal image, or only the epidermatic contact, that stirs the affections and thrills the emotions? — Nor need the conventional psychologist imagine that by the iteration of that jejune if convenient phrase the "association of ideas" he explains such thrill. A million of associated ideas would be powerless and inert were there not beneath the ideating faculty a supreme and psychic centre (though one perhaps with its bodily periphery) which felt and knew and was uplifted or cast down. What "association" can there be when a woman's first-born babe puts his lips to her breast? Yet what emotions well-up at his touch! "Association"? Yes; but not the association of such ideas as this one mother may have had; associations of such ideas — and emotions — as myriads of ancestral mothers had had. Association is *cosmic,* not individual. Ideas are ideas; emo-

tions are something else, — and emotions play the deuce with one's game.

Wherefore, ardent golfer, seeking to improve thy game, look to it thou hast no emotions; look to it that thou shuttest up thy soul. At the very first tee; nay, or ere thou leavest the club-house, take thought with thyself and say: "Be my opponent doughty or to be looked-down-upon, be he strong or weak, a scratch man or heavily handicapped, he shall *not* affect my play: 'tis myself I have to fight." 'Tis not an easy thing to do, but done it must be — and at the very outset. — All of which is indeed only one more proof of the fact that in this game, which outwardly and to the inexperienced seems merely a test of skill and strength, there is in reality some unimaginable, inexplicable contest between some inner and innominable centres in the combatants. For it is not his mere trick of manner that makes one man antipathetic to another on the links; it is something far more deep-seated than this: it is something inherent in the innermost recesses of his nature, something invisible, intangible, arcanal. — Is there some inscrutable medium between soul and soul, the existence of which only golf reveals? I recommend the links

as a fruitful field for the experiments of the thought-reader, or the investigations of the Society for Psychical Research.

## LXXX

Golf, indeed, is a fruitful field of psychical phænomena. For example, hypnotists of the most modern school aver, I believe, that there exist somewhere in the brain or mind of man five distinct layers of consciousness. For proofs of multiple consciousness the hypnotist should frequent the links. He will there often find one layer of consciousness roundly upbraiding another, sometimes in the most violent language of abuse, for a foozled stroke. And so earnest sometimes is the vituperation poured by the unmerciful abuser upon the unfortunate foozler, that truly one is apt sometimes sincerely to commiserate the former, and to regard him as the victim of a multiple personality, and not at all blamable for his own poor play. Golfers, too, have I known who imagine themselves constantly accompanied by a sort of Socratic δαίμων prompting them to this, that, or the other method of manipulating the club — without doubt a

mystic manner of looking upon one's *alter ego*, one's "empirical ego," as Mr. Marshall calls it.[1] It would be interesting to "suggest" to a duffer, while in the cataleptic trance, to keep his eye on the ball and to follow-through, and then to watch the result. If these fundamental rules (so easy to preach, so difficult to practise) could be relegated to some automatic substratum of consciousness, leaving the higher centres free to judge of distance and direction (for it is thus, probably, that the man who has golfed from childhood plays), the task of many a professional might be simplified. All of which goes to show that, in the game of golf, the mind plays a larger part than, in many quarters, is apt to be imagined.

The physiological explanation of the preponderant influence of mind over body in golf is this: Precise coördination of hand and eye is necessary; this coördination is directed by nerve currents (cerebral and cerebro-spinal) conveyed to the muscles; which nerve-currents depend for their regularity upon the supreme and

[1] See *Consciousness*. By Henry Rutgers Marshall, M.A., L.H.D., New York: The Macmillan Company. 1909. *Passim*.

regulating centres of intelligence which by custom we call the mind. Unless the supreme and regulating centres of intelligence, wherein lie embedded the cells from which orders for muscular movement derive, are, first, in thorough working order, and, second, intent upon the business in hand, *i.e.*, attentive, the orders conveyed through the delicate efferent nerve-fibres governing the equally delicate muscular fibres of the fingers, hands, wrists, legs, and arms, will be ineffectual, and the resulting stroke inaccurate. In short, it would seem that a man, to play golf well, must play like a machine; but like a machine in which the mental motor must be as perfect as the muscular mechanism.

## LXXXI

Perhaps the sense most prominently brought into play in golf is that to which I have already referred and which is known to physiologists as kinæsthesis or the "muscular sense" — the sixth sense, as it is sometimes called. By the muscular sense it is that we calculate the exact amount of force required for a particular posture *or movement*. It is by this sense that we wield

so deftly the knife and fork, the spoon, and the pen. To keep a bouncing-ball bouncing just so high, requires just such a tap and no more. That tap is regulated by the muscular sense. To poise an ounce weight on the tips of the fingers requires just such relative rigidity of the phalangeal flexors and extensors. Double the resilience of the bouncing-ball, or poise two ounces instead of one, and the taps or the muscular rigidity must immediately be changed, the amount of change being regulated by the muscular sense. Now, in ordinary life this sense is exercised only within very narrow limits, and is rarely, if ever, called upon to judge of great distances. It carries food to the mouth; it raises a hat; it is skilled in

"The nice conduct of a clouded cane";

it may occasionally throw a stone at a dog or a boot-jack at a cat; but it does little more. Some games exercise it more than others. In cricket it is highly valuable; in tennis and racquets even more so. Rowing utilizes it but little. In billiards the use of a single cue and the exiguous area of the board restrict its variations. In baseball you hit, and in football you kick, as hard as you can. In croquet it is important;

although in croquet there is not much opportunity for diversity of stroke. But in golf! In golf, within the space of ten minutes, it is called upon to drive two hundred yards; loft another hundred; and putt five inches. In golf you have strokes that require the strength of a slog in cricket, combined with the delicacy of cup-and-ball. In golf you get the whole gamut of the muscular sense, from the gigantic swipe at the tee to the gentle tap on the green. It is called into play at every stroke, and it differs with every difference of club — its weight, its length of shaft, the angle which its face subtends to the horizon, its rigidity or flexibility, the construction and material of its head. — Golf, in short, is a sort of Gargantuan jugglery, a prodigious prestidigitation, a Titanic thimble-rigging, a mighty legerdemain.

## LXXXII

Among the psychological aspects of golf, as we have seen, is its effect upon the character; and this is neither small nor unimportant. There is no more inexorable an opponent than your *links.* Implacable as fate, they exact to the

uttermost farthing for the minutest divergence from the narrow path. Atropos will sooner be turned aside than they. Your mortal foe may relent, may show mercy; in golf, between first tee and home hole look thou not for changeableness nor shadow of turning. And for peccant man this is good. It is disciplinary. Whom golf loveth it chasteneth; and few men but come off the course, be it on the first round or the five-hundredth, chastened, and by consequence strengthened. Even victory fails to puff up, for victory always is hardly won, and always it is not your natural, but your human, foe that is defeated. Your natural foe, with his hazards and his bunkers still unharmed and threatening, still grimly smiles, still challenges you to completer conquest. For, in short, your links are invincible. Could you hole out in one on every drive, the holes would be only halved, and you and they would come out but even all. For *space* is the one eternal and immutable enemy of man. It is to conquer space that we resort to steam and electricity, the penny post, and the tram-car, the motor and the bicycle, the brassey and the cleek. So that, even if you brought every hole within holing distance of every drive,

the necessity of that drive would prove the necessity of that effort to overcome space.

It would be an attractive, but perhaps a too transcendental, theme to imagine that in some future, supralunary, *n*-dimensional world, this infinite enemy, space, will at last be worsted. There the teeing-ground will be identical with the putting-green, the drive one with the putt, the hole coincident with the tee. There achievement will be accomplished without effort, attainment will be identical with endeavour, the ideal will be the real. That will be on beatific links indeed, where room for bunkers will be none!

For not even against Bogey is it that even on this spatial and temporal world you pit your strength. Bogey is but a human compromise between erring and unerring Nature; an ideal player, an apotheosized golfer, an anthropomorphic deity of the links. Bogey is that great exemplar whom, despairing of overcoming great Nature herself, we each strive to imitate, even to excel. He is the player who is never off his game; is always in training; never makes a mistake; never loses his temper or his head; *whom* no defeat dejects and no victory elates;

who is imperturbable, persistent, placid. In golf, as in life, frail and mortal man is brought into conflict with sempiternal Nature. His pygmy strength, his uncertain skill, are arrayed against the immutable, the inexpugnable. And as we may say that all evolution, all progress, all development, have come about solely because of unceasing combat with unyielding Nature; that man is not now an ape, and the ape is not now a mollusc, because of that fight with cosmic force; so we may see in golf something of the same struggle, with its fortifying influences on character. And golf is good for the character in many ways. It is serious as life. It admits no peccadillos; it permits no compromises; it recognizes no venial sins. A false step, a scarce perceptible slip, a moment's hesitation, a single distracted glance — and you are lost. There is nothing to complain of in the conditions. The laws of the game are simple as the decalogue. Abstract and absolute justice is meted out to you. If you fail, it is you who are culpable, and none other. But it is in this very simplicity and rigidity of law that there lies concealed, for aspiring and progressive man, the subtlest lure.

## LXXXIII

After all, what leads you on in golf is this. — You think a perfect pitch of excellence can be attained. But that pitch of excellence continually recedes the nearer you approach it. Intellectual apprehension outruns physical achievement. Accordingly, the allurement is unceasing, and the fascination endless. Always you can imagine a longer drive, a more accurate approach, a more certain putt; never, or rarely ever, do you effect all three at every hole in the course. But all men — who are golfers — always live in hopes of accomplishing them. The conditions never vary; the obstacles remain always the same; the thing to be done to-day is precisely that which was to be done yesterday, last year; and as man never is, but always to be, blessed; as hope springs eternal in the human breast; as progress, as development, is the one incontestable instinct implanted in all things living, the cosmic principle, the law of heaven and earth, the motive of all effort, the germ of all action — the phantom of perfect success flits ever before the ardent golfer. And what golfer ever was there who was not ardent?

## LXXXIV

How comes it about, then, that, if the conditions are so simple, success is so difficult? The fact is, there is enormous *chance* in golf. There must be, when you propel a cubic inch of gutta-percha over acres of soil. Were the links a gigantic billiard-table, chance might to a certain extent be eliminated, as no doubt in billiards it actually is. But the links being what they are, namely, some two or three square miles of open country, variegated in its every square inch, in any one square inch of which you may lie, and each square inch of which may affect differently the character of your stroke or the roll of your ball, chance, to the beginner in golf, we may safely compute as infinite. But, as one improves, the conditions being fixed and determined, skill directly eliminates chance. In no other game is the equipoise between chance and skill so exact, since in all other games a third and variable factor enters into the problem, the skill, namely, of your opponent. In nothing, perhaps, is the perennial fascination of golf so plainly to be found as in this direct ratio between the increment of skill and the

corresponding decrement of chance. We may put it thus: —

Let $a$ = skill, and
Let $x$ = chance; then
$x$ varies from $\infty$ to 0 as
$a$ varies from 0 to $\infty$.

That is, when the skill is zero, chance is infinite; when (if ever) skill is infinite, chance will be zero. There is no likelihood of any links losing their charm through the entire elimination of chance by reason of superlative skill. Golf will never become a sort of outdoor billiards. It will take a million years to develope the muscular sense to such a pitch as that it will land the ball, after a hundred yards' flight, plumb on a given point, free from all cups, on a perfect lie — though, from the annually improving records for several links, the muscular sense is evidently tending that way.

## LXXXV

And now, wherein lies the supreme mystery of this so-called "game"? In this surely, that whereas the thing to be done seems most easy of accomplishment, it is as a matter of physical and metaphysical fact a feat requiring

the deftest use of the most delicate mechanism. Mind (or matter, which you will) in the long course of its evolution from amœba to man, has as yet, so far as we know, here upon this planet produced nothing more complex in structure than the human neural apparatus; and it is this apparatus, in its most secret recesses, that is called into requisition by every player at every stroke. And whereas the thing to be done is rigidly fixed, but the anatomical machinery by which it is to be done is capable, humanly speaking, of infinite improvement, the pitch of excellence at which we aim continually recedes the farther we advance, and we are lured on, and lured on . . . to the delight of professionals and caddies, to the pecuniary profit of club stewards and manufacturers of expensive balls, but to the sorrow of waiting wives and to the scorn of maledictory onlookers.

We can put no limit, humanly speaking, to the possibilities of the neural system. What the brain, the spinal cord, the nerves, and the muscles may not some day be capable of achieving, we cannot say; and to what pitch of perfection Professor Loeb's "associative memory" may be trained it is equally impossible to deter-

mine. And every golfer feels in himself these possibilities of improvement. Intellectual apprehension, I have said, outruns physical achievement. Every golfer, that is, knows precisely and definitely what it is he is called upon to do; but he feels that the machinery by which it is to be done may be indefinitely improved — if only he can discover how to improve it. Accordingly every golfer strenuously endeavours to improve it. "It can be done; I can do it"; so every golfer says to himself. — He *will* do it; by the Styx he declares he will. — The Professional of my links once went round in the magnificent score of sixty-six. Upon my congratulating him, what was his reply? "Well, sir, I missed three putts. I can do it in sixty-three." Some day he will,[1] and then no doubt he will say, "Well, sir, I missed so-and-so. I can do it in sixty-one." — Will he rest content then? Of course not. And the same spirit urges on the veriest duffer.

The curious thing is that this extraordinary ambition seems to appertain solely to golf. On every round every golfer strains every nerve to break his own record. Nor is there any

[1] *I believe he has since done it in sixty-three.*

other game in which defeat is so poignantly felt. Why? We must fall back on the theory that it is because the thing to be done seems so simple, so patently, so palpably simple, that everybody thinks he ought to be able to do it, and *therefore* defeat rankles — rankles. Were it hugely difficult; did it require the superlative development of this, that, or the other intellectual or physical faculty, we should succumb with a good grace — as we do when we play with an acknowledged expert, say, of chess, or billiards, or whist, or whatnot. But in golf, to succumb with a good grace is to acknowledge that in the very fibre and essence of the man who beats us there is something to which we cannot attain. — Which seems one more proof of the fact that in golf it is the very fibre and essence of a man that count; not mere power, or knack, or agility. And no doubt this is true. How many games have been won by indomitableness of spirit alone; how many by a quiet self-confidence; how many by shutting one's self up in one's self; how many by a reserve and a restraint that can watch with perfect equanimity hole after hole won by unwonted brilliancy, and yet win by dogged and determined adhesion to steady play!

## LXXXVI

From all this is there anything practical to be learned? I am afraid not. If you have golfed from childhood, you will laugh at it; if you have taken up golf at forty, it will not be of much use to you. The youthful caddie, whose cortical centres are in a docile stage and who accordingly picks up the game by sheer imitation; and the elderly professional, who has done nothing but make clubs and swing them all his life, probably play almost automatically — as you or I wield a knife and fork, a spoon, or a pen. To the one, golf is what gambols are to the kitten; to the other, what mousing is to the cat. Not theirs to analyse the method of their play. I know a professional who says that in reality there is only one stroke in the game in which he has to keep in mind one little rule, namely, to play off the right foot in a hanging lie. How different from the amateur novice! I was playing the other day with a University professor, a charming man and an erudite. He happened to be off his drive, and at the fifteenth tee (a sequestered spot), with a sort of despairing cry to Heaven he muttered as he took his stance, "Now,

I wonder whether I *can* for once keep my eye on the ball and follow through?" He did not even attempt to burthen his University brain with more than two, and these elementary, injunctions.

## LXXXVII

"But can you not tell us," I can readily understand the reader — by this time no doubt (and quite legitimately) impatient — saying, "can you not tell us what it really is at bottom that wins in golf? What is the one thing needful? What is the pearl of great price?" — My dear sir, would to Heaven that I could! If I could tell myself, most gladly would I tell you. — However, upon one thing I presume all golfers will be agreed, upon this, namely: that, *all other things being equal* (but they never are), the secret of success lies in two things: (1) tranquillity of mind; and (2) dexterity of muscle. Given two golfers absolutely evenly matched in character, temperament, and strength; both equally self-confident, collected, and careful; victory will fall to him who is at once more self-contained and more dexterous. Other things being equal, if you can drive and approach and putt as easily

and effortlessly as a facile writer dots his *i*'s, and crosses his *t*'s, you will win. There is no doubt about that. Golf is like writing with a crowbar. If Monsieur Paderewski could play golf as he plays Liszt's Sixth Rhapsodie Hongroise, nobody could beat him; for in those rapid semi-demi-semiquaver staccato octaves Paderewski combines a strength with a dexterity marvellous to witness. Curiously enough, in golf dexterity seems to count even more than strength. I have seen a superb little lady golfer, who assuredly could not have had more than nineteen birthdays, and who I am quite sure tipped the scales well under nine stone, drive ball after ball clean and straight, some just under, some over, two hundred yards — to the delight and the admiration and the adoration of great male golfers in the gallery. That was due surely to the dexterity with which she made use of all the strength she possessed. At the moment when her club met her ball, every ounce of weight and every foot-pound of energy she could command were communicated to the ball, without altering by a hair's breadth the even rhythm of her swing or the faultless precision of her stance. — Nay, more, she put her whole heart and soul

into the stroke as well; and these counted for much, very much. (If you wish to know for how much, I will tell you: at the eighth green I saw her pick up her opponent's ball, take a big piece of mud off it, and smilingly replace it. It may have been contrary to all the rules, but it showed the sportsman's heart and soul!) All I can say is, Go thou and do likewise. Ah! many were the grown men and women in that gallery who wished that they could!

Yes; I take it it is the consummate combination of strength and dexterity that — the psychological factors being eliminated — ultimately win. You may have the strength of an ox; but unless you have also the agility of a cat it will avail you little. Unless you can drive straight and judge distance to a nicety, mere length is naught. Yet, on the other hand, unless you can cover a great deal of ground on your long game, even extreme accuracy on your short game is heavily handicapped. But the real and most effective combination is that of immense power with extreme delicacy. Therein lies the mystery of golf, so far as the mere bodily frame is concerned. It consists just in this, that you can wield a driver weighing a pound just as easily

and as surely as you can a penholder weighing a drachm; that you can use your strongest muscles — almost every muscle in your body at once — at their extremest limit as easily and surely as you sign your name. — I am cock-sure my Pro can approach a hole better than he can sign his name. But, as we have seen, this effective combination of strength and skill is itself the result of some mysterious and inner psychic centres forever inscrutable to man.

But always we must remember that as a condition precedent to all dexterity there must first and foremost be cultivated a great tranquillity. Without absolute tranquillity of mind there can be no dexterity of muscle. For without tranquillity of mind there can be no self-confidence, no concentration of thought, no attention, no occlusion of extraneous influence. The volatile, the feather-brained, the shallow-pated, the mercurial, the vacillating — these will never play golf. "And how, then," I hear my impatient reader asking, "am I to obtain tranquillity of mind?" Ah! it is no easy matter, that. It is no simple and elemental virtue, is tranquillity; it is not a thing that will appear upon call, or that can be summoned at a moment's notice, for

it is a moral attribute rather than a mental or a physical. Hear Hugh Blair, D.D., F.R.S. Ed., one of the Ministers of the High Church, and Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the University of Edinburgh:[1] —

"It is only by following the path which eternal Wisdom has pointed out, that we can arrive at the blessed temple of tranquillity, and obtain a station there: By doing, or at least endeavouring to do, our duty to God and man; by acquiring a humble trust . . . by cultivating our minds, and properly employing our time and thoughts; by governing our passions and our temper; by correcting all unreasonable expectations from the world and from men; and, in the midst of worldly business, habituating ourselves to calm retreat and serious recollection."[2]

— Very much should I like to know whether the Reverend Professor Hugh Blair, etc., etc., played golf, and, if so, how he played it.

[1] So runs his style and title as set forth in the forefront of his book.

[2] *Sermons*, Vol. IV, pp. 260, 261. London. 1818.

## LXXXVIII

John Stuart Mill once anxiously debated whether there would not come a time when all the tunes possible with the five tones and two semi-tones of the octave would be exhausted. So, many a non-golfing wife and unsympathizing onlooker thinks there surely must come a time when all the possibilities of golf will be exhausted, and the erring husband and friend will tire of trudging over the country trying to put half-crown balls into four-and-a-half-inch holes. The outsider does not know that at every hole is enacted every time a small but intensely interesting three-act drama.[1] There is Act I, the Drive, with its appropriate mise-en-scène: the gallery, the attendant caddies, the toss for the honour. At long holes it is a long Act if we include the brassey shots. There is Act II, the Approach. This is what the French call the *nœud* of the plot: much depends on the Approach. And the mise-en-scène is correspondingly enhanced in interest: the lie, the hazard, the wind, the character of the ground — all become of increasing

[1] I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness for the germ *of this idea* to a capital article by "T. P." in *M. A. P.*

importance. There is Act III, the putt. It also has its background, its "business," and its "properties": the caddie at the flag, the irregularities of the green, the peculiarities of the turf, the possibilities of a stymie. — Eighteen dramas, some tragical, some farcical, in every round; and in every round protagonist and deuteragonist constantly interchanging parts. No wonder the ardent golfer does not tire of his links, any more than the ardent musician tires of his notes. What theatre-goer enjoys such plays? And what staged plays have such a human interest? And, best of all, they are acted in the open air, amid delightful scenery, with the assurance of healthy exercise and pleasant companionship. What theatre-goer enjoys such plays? — And when the curtain is rung down and the eighteenth flag replaced, instead of a cigar in a taxicab, or a whisky-and-soda at a crowded bar, or a snack at a noisy grill-room, there is the amicable persiflage in the dressing-room or the long quiet talk on the verandah.

Nor does the golfer ever tire of the stage upon which these his outdoor dramas are played. — I have been promising myself time and again to go round some day, unarmed with clubs and

carrying no balls, for the express purpose of seeing and enjoying in detail the beauties of my links. There are some woods fringing portions of the course most tempting to explore, woods in which I get glimpses of lovable things, and a wealth of colour the which for its very loveliness I forgive for hiding my sliced ball. There are deep ravines — alack! I know them well — where, between lush grass edges trickles a tiny rill, by the quiet banks of which, but for the time-limit, I should loiter long. There is a great breezy hill, bespattered with humble plants, to traverse the broad back of which almost tempts to slice and to pull; a thick boscage, too, whereon the four seasons play a quartet on the theme of green, and every sunlit day composes a symphony beautiful to behold. And there are nooks, and corners, and knolls, and sloping lawns on which the elfish shadows dance. Smells too, curious smells, from noonday pines, and evening mists, from turf, and fallen leaves. . . . What is it these things *say?* Whither do they beckon? What do they reveal? I seem to be listening to some great cosmic obligato the while I play; a great and unheard melody swelling from the great heart of Nature. — Every golfer knows

something of this. But, as Herodotus says, these be holy things, whereof I speak not. *Favete linguis.*

## LXXXIX

Lastly, let us not omit to include amongst the elements of the fascination which golf wields over its votaries, that *gaudium certaminis*,[1] that joy of contest, which always the game evokes. It is one of the chief ingredients of the game, and it is evoked and re-evoked at every point of the game, from the initial drive to the ultimate putt. It is an ingredient of every manly sport, is this "warrior's stern joy," but in golf it is paramount and overt. Every stroke arouses it, for the exact value of every stroke is patent to both player and opponent. Few other games keep the inborn masculine delight in sheer struggle at so high a pitch. No wonder the stakes in golf are merely nominal; no wonder that often there are no stakes at all: the keenness of the rivalry is stimulus enough. — And this, surely, is one of the chief beauties of the game.

[1] Thank you, W. H. B., for this hint. — Do you remember, Reader, what Nonius Marcellus, the grammarian, says about *gaudium*? — *Gaudium in sapiente, et in rebus bonis semper est.* — Cap. v, n. 91.

It will never be spoiled by the intrusion of professionalism; at least it will never be played by highly-paid professionals for the delectation of a howling and betting mob; nor, thank Heavens, will rooters ever sit on fences and screech at its results. At present it is uncontaminated by either "bookies" or "bleachers"; nay, it has not yet reached that stage in its history when it asks for gate-money.

## XC

But the ultimate analysis of the mystery of golf is hopeless — as hopeless as the ultimate analysis of that of metaphysics or of that of the feminine heart. Fortunately, the hopelessness as little troubles the golfer as it does the philosopher or the lover. The *summum bonum* of the philosopher, I suppose, is to evolve a nice little system of metaphysics of his own. The *summum bonum* of the lover is of course to get him a nice little feminine heart of his own. Well, the *summum bonum* of the golfer is to have a nice little private links of his own (and, nowadays, perhaps, a private manufactory of rubber-cored balls into the bargain), and to be able to go round his private links daily, accompanied

by a professional and a caddie. — It would be an interesting experiment to add to these a psychologist, a leech, a chirurgeon, a psychiatrist, an apothecary, and a parson.

To sum up, then, in what does the secret of golf lie? Not in one thing; but in many. And in many so mysteriously conjoined, so incomprehensibly interwoven, as to baffle analysis. The mind plays as large a part as the muscles; and perhaps the moral nature as large a part as the mind. Suffice it to say that all golfers know that golf must be played seriously, earnestly; as seriously, as earnestly, as life.

## XCI

But may not also the simple delights of the game and its surroundings, with their effect upon the mind and the emotions, be included under the allurements and the mystery of golf? My knowledge of links up to the present is limited, but on mine there are delights which, to me a duffer, are like Pisgah sights: hills, valleys, trees, a gleaming lake in the distance, a grand and beloved piece of bunting lending gorgeous colour to the scene; a hospitable

club-house with spacious verandahs and arm-chairs; shower-baths; tea and toast; whisky and soda; genial companionship; and the ever delectable pipe. Has any one yet sung these delights of the game? the comradeship in sport, the friendliness, the community of sentiment, the frankness of speech, the good-will, the "generosity in trifles"? Or of the links themselves? the great breeze that greets you on the hill, the whiffs of air—pungent, penetrating—that come through green things growing, the hot smell of pines at noon, the wet smell of fallen leaves in autumn, the damp and heavy air of the valleys at eve, the lungs full of oxygen, the sense of freedom on a great expanse, the exhilaration, the vastness, the buoyancy, the exaltation? . . . And how beautiful the vacated links at dawn, when the dew gleams untrodden beneath the pendent flags and the long shadows lie quiet on the green; when no caddie intrudes upon the still and silent lawn and no partner makes claim upon your attention and talk; when you stroll from hole to hole and drink in the beauties of a land to which you know you will be all too blind when the sun mounts high and you toss *for* the honour!

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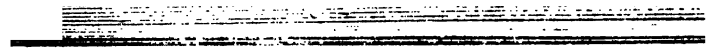

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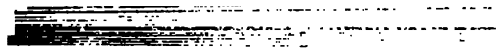

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